BLACK FLAG

FOR ANARCHIST RESISTANCE

Issue 209

£1.50

Women on the Waterfront

Strike support from the grassroots

MOVE

A history of the radical Black organisation

Italian Social Centres

Successful local Anarchist organising in Italy

Plus:....

Fighting back against the Job Seekers Allowance, Anarchism and ceremony, Class, News from the UK and around the world, Reviews, views and a whole lot of attitude!

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For a social system based on mutual aid and voluntary co-operation – against state control and all forms of government and economic repression. To establish a share in the general prosperity for all – the breaking down of racial, religious, national and sex barriers – and to fight for the life of one world.

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Editorial

AS WE GO to press, quite a few interesting things are starting to happen. Most promising is the Reclaim the Future weekend in Liverpool, where the dockers mark the first anniversary of their lockout. They are being joined by anti-Criminal Justice Act campaigners, road protesters, Reclaim the Streets and other grassroots protesters. As well as the normal demo-type parade, the event promises a mass action at Seaforth dock. Unlike the dim lefties who call for mass picketing on a site with over 30 entrances spread out over a large area, the Reclaim the Streets, Shoreham and Newbury tactics show potential for a real blockade. By the time you read this, you'll know whether it succeeded or not. But at least they're trying. And more importantly the people involved are seeing each other as allies outside of "official" structures.

This can also happen with the Job Seekers Alliance, Groundswell, the only claimants' groups run by claimants, working with grass roots CPSA members can make this new attack on our class unworkable.You may find your copy of *Black Flag* delayed by the postal workers strike, a small price to pay.

When we began publishing as a magazine, our target was to come out quarterly. We are now doing so. Our next aim is to consolidate and expand. To this end we are looking at internet sites, and are pleased to offer *Black Flag* on tape if anyone requests it. To continue putting out what we feel is an improving publication, we need more money. If thirty people took out a standing order of £10 a month, we would cover our day to day costs. Write to us and we'll send you a form. Even if you can't afford that much, every little helps, as do donations in stamps, envelopes and so on.

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T/SOR/49/1/3/2

SPUCulike?

IT'S TEMPTING to think that the doctor from St Thomas' Hospital who broke the story of the woman expecting twins and her intention to abort one, was engineering a subtle trap for the likes of SPUC and LIFE. Because SPUC went for it like a shot.

In offering the woman thousands of pounds to keep the second fetus, they were admitting that poverty may be a factor in a decision to abort. Touchingly SPUC were willing to come to the rescue, only to discover that the woman in question had already had the abortion.

Their uncharacteristic new concern for the financial difficulties of single parents was shortlived when it was discovered that the woman had a partner and was relatively well off. Predictable outrage followed (historically, a blind eye has been turned to abortions, sterilisations etc. involving working class / black / third world women, but to abort good middle class white stock is something else completely.)

The same week saw the story of a woman who, through fertiltiy treatment, had become pregnant with eight fetuses. To continue with the multiple pregnancy could only result in the death of all 8 babies and the possible loss of the mother's life. But who cares about the life of a fully formed (if somewhat stupid) human adult, when there are little lumps of jelly for SPUC to rescue. SPUC were happy to support the mother's masochistic decision to go ahead, and were saved from doling out further funds, only by the heartwarming interevention of Max Clifford and the *News of the World.*

And then we were told that SPUC had paid out for a couple's house extension, because they simply didn't have the room for twins; one of the fetuses would have to go unless the dream extension was forthcoming!

This suggests to me a winning fund raising strategy for our chosen causes; find someone in the movement who is planning on having a baby (shouldn't be too difficult, anarchists seem to be breeding like rabbits at the moment, passing on good revolutionary genes to the next generation just like the Unabomber tells us), tell SPUC you're going to abort it because the squat doesn't have a swimming pool for little Millstonia's birthing ceremony, and hey presto a nice fat cheque should arrive from SPUC / LIFE / the local loonie god botherers etc. The really good thing about the strategy, is that if you do decide to abort afterall, the pro life groups will have run out of funds to demonstrate outside the clinic.

K.Herod

Metropolitan Police - Murderers in Uniform

FOR THE LAST few years, the Met Police have had a "liberal" commissioner, Paul Condon, who has claimed some limited success in improving relations with the black community. He's had an easier ride because the media ignore black deaths at the hands of the police.

As anarchists we know you can change the guy at the top as much as you like if the system stays the same. This applies as much to reactionary institutions like the police as it does to society as a whole. And the police force is still a hotbed of racism and bigotry. Worse, with the advent of long handled batons and CS spray, it's a much better armed hotbed of racism and bigotry.

In December 94 Nigerian asylum seeker Shiji Lapite was put in a neckhold by Stoke Newington police and died from asphyxiation. He had suffered 45 separate injuries, while the plod had barely a graze. They admitted kicking him in the head and biting him. The jury returned a verdict of unlawful killing, however the CPS couldn't find enough evidence to convict.

On the 8th May 95, South London plod went over the top with their new toys and killed a black man, Brian Douglas. To date no officer has been charged and Brian's family are considering a private prosecution. At the inquest, the killer cop claimed his baton was aimed at the shoulder as he had been trained, but it slid up to hit Brian Douglas on the head. The jury, never having heard the one about Isaac Newton and the apple, believed him!

On December 5th '95, 25 year old Wayne Douglas (no relation to Brian) was killed in the same way in South London. A protest and vigil outside Brixton police station turned into a riot after the usual insensitive policing, while the media went on about lawlessness and damage to property, ignoring why people were there in the first place, and why they were so angry.

The Police Federation has threatened to prosecute those who spoke out at the rally in Brixton, in what can only be seen as an attempt to silence protest and stop people asking awkward questions. Questions like why Ibrahima Sey, who peacefully volunteered himself for arrest in East London in March this year, was assaulted, handcuffed and sprayed with CS gas at Ilford police station. Within minutes he was dead, the first victim of the CS spray trials in selected forces. The Home Office has since announced that CS spray is to be used nationally, so more will die. The one bonus is that cops keep spraying themselves in much the same way they shoot themselves in the foot when armed. Some forces are so worried about cops spraying themselves they won't be using it. Says a lot about how much value is placed on our safety?

Ibrahima's family have been outspoken in their demands for justice. This has led to harassment. His brother Aliu was arrested on returning from Ibrahima's funeral in the Gambia, and though he was released he has since had his passport confiscated.

The police are little use when one is the victim of a crime - they can't stop it and are no help afterwards, except to give a crime number for your insurance if you have it. The presence of these increasingly well armed thugs on our streets shows only that things will continue to get worse as our rulers impose a much tougher policing style.

Contact: Ibrahima Sey Memorial Campaign c/o PO Box 273 London E7

and Shiji Lapite Memorial Committee (at the same address)

Taking on The Benefit Thieves

"Are you demonstrating against Peter Lilley ? I knew it was his house, because a friend of mine, who is claiming benefits, and works as a prostitute, a male prostitute, has visited this place several times."
(Passer by to ARCH demonstrators picketing benefit fraudster Peter Lilley's London Lovenest in protest against withdrawal of benefits to asylum seekers, July 1996)

BY NOW MOST people know that The Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) for unemployed people in Britain comes in on October 7th. Resistance is finally growing, but the anti-JSA movement has nothing of the strength of anti-poll tax movements or even the resistance to the Criminal Justice Act. Groundswell, the coalition of mostly autonomous claimants activists has held action across the country. The best of these was probably when a mob escaped from a boring lefty rally in the Methodist Hall in Westminster and stormed the nearby Benefits Agency HQ setting off fire alarms and shutting the place down. The local groups are still discussing different strategies and coming up with a lot of ideas but there is still a real lack of involvement from the vast majority of claimants despite the severe implications of the attacks on them.

The JSA is not the harshest cut we've seen in the last 15 years, compared with the total withdrawal of benefits to many asylum seekers or to 16 to 18 year olds, but it is the most wide ranging and affects a huge number of people. In conjunction with other schemes like "training for work" it will undermine any success that the TUC might have in its campaign for a minimum wage. It is a huge extension of powers to force people into shit jobs and to control the lives of claimants that have been introduced since Restart interviews in 1986, or the Actively Seeking Work test in 1989. These new powers, together with the restructuring of the Benefits Agency, will place further responsibilities and powers on frontline Job Centre staff.

Anyone who has been signing during the last few years will have noticed the sickening hypocrisy of the change from being called claimants or even clients to "customers", the ridiculous "charters", the open plan offices and '80s office furniture and the workers' name tags and smart clothes. Behind all this is a deliberate control of the workforce through a combination of inducements (cut off targets etc.) and intimidation, the boss sitting just across the office, instead of being locked away in a darkened room. A lot of the better elements amongst the workers have just given up and left, the union militants are largely the lower ranks of the SWP and the Militant (who are, of course trying to lead opposition to the JSA from both claimants and workers).

The Bosses Make Us Sick ! Have you looked at your boss recently ? Aren't they ugly ? Doesn't merely the sight of their face make you sick ? Demand that they are screened off from workers and claimants alike. This could easily be achieved if the ES supplied each boss with a suitably constructed paper bag to wear over their head, complete with eyeholes. They should wear these at all time.
"Workers Autonomy" leaflet against the demand for screens

There has been recent strike action, if you read the lefty papers it is "against the JSA". If you listen to the demands the strikes are for screens to protect them from angry claimants. Some people are thankful that at least someone somewhere is going on strike. The left always argued that sabotage/over payments/ non-co-operation was impossible in the dole offices. Now with a meek workforce that has probably lost all the initiative, they are possibly right. Does that mean we should be supporting the strikes for screens in any way ? On the one hand it might be helpful for everybody to have a clearer picture of the set up at the dole office. Getting rid of all that office furniture and bringing back the screens will look much more realistic and the "customers charters" would look pretty stupid beside the reinforced glass. Rebuilding the screens might shut down a few offices for a few weeks, giving claimants a bit of respite. When dole offices are shut through redecoration, arson, bulldozing etc., giros are still sent out. But do you support cops striking for bigger riot shields ? More obviously, we will look stupid when we go to occupy a dole office and find the place is sealed tight with security screens. Most importantly the whole issue of screens allows unions and bosses to scapegoat claimants and portray us as the problem.

There have been some attempts to organise resistance inside the dole offices. A leaflet put out by the Public Service Workers Network and Norwich Unemployed Action Group did call for individual action as well as collective resistance: ***"Individually we can refuse to go along with meeting targets for disqualification. Make sure people signing on are fully aware of their rights. Pass out any information you can on local implementation, targets, problems, managers who are giving staff a hard time, etc. Speak out against the us and them mentality. Every little helps and can inspire others. But collectively we can really make a difference."***

Rebuilding the confidence of other workers in the dole offices through having an attitude is not part of CPSA policy but without workers rediscovering the power of solidarity they will find themselves in little better a position than casual workers or claimants.

Some of the claimant's resistance groups have good relationships with the local union branches or useful contacts with individual workers but while the claimants groups remain small and relatively week the relationship with the unions is always going to be a bit one-sided. Anti-JSA activists have held a number of occupations and pickets. Recent actions targeted JSA implementation managers individually. JIMs in London, Manchester and Edinburgh were visited at their offices. In Nottingham the JIM had his photo plastered over the city.

Groundswell say; ***"Although frontline Job Centre and Benefits Agency staff will be forced to implement the JSA regime from October, we pin the blame firmly on management and policy makers. As usual policy makers and politicians disguise their schemes as "help" for unemployed people and managers make those dreams a reality, whilst hiding behind low-paid casual staff. Their actions and complicity wreck people's lives. We aren't fooled and we intend to hold them to account."***

A new tactic "three strikes and you're out" extends this to excessively zealous creeps in the dole office who cut off or harass claimants. While sounding more like a management threat against union activists it is a tactic that mirrors the Benefit Agency bureaucracy with two "warning letters" followed by publicising their behaviour and an angry demo in their office. Claimants groups are clear about how well targeted this must be but it will be limited by the size and influence of most claimants groups.

Action against special claims units investigation officers in the 80s was highly effective. Snoopers received harassment both from claimants' unions and their unwilling colleagues that was every bit as effective as the strike action which also took place. This was a different situation. Exposure of the investigation teams directly interfered with their fraud inquiries, tipping off working claimants, and they were easier to target for militants in the UBOs as the teams were outsiders brought in for a few weeks at a time.

However, both management and union beaurocrats are wetting themselves at the prospect of action that goes beyond the usual picket/leaflet/sit-in tactics. The bosses have already got the cops involved and will obviously be trying to target "ringleaders". The Employment Service and the CPSA have sent out circulars. The ES exaggerate the threats with talk of possible violence and tries to scare the workers from giving out information about managers.

The CPSA leaflet refers to "unacceptable threats", calls for management to protect them, and says that they will not work with "groups who threaten and harass CPSA members" in their "campaign" against the JSA.

Both totally miss the point. ES and BA workers will only be targeted if they are out of order. Furthermore any threat to the safety of workers from claimants is going to come from enraged claimants with nothing to lose. Three Strikes and You're Out will be polite in comparison.

ACTION BY workers and activists shows our resistance but it isn't going to make the JSA unworkable or stop claimants getting stuffed by it. The anti-JSA groups are still distant from the majority of claimants who don't see them as relevant or useful. Getting clued up on the JSA etc, working as claimants unions have done in the past, with advice and experience about what not to say or how to work the system (unlike official funded advice centres which too often give correct but useless advice) may be a lot of work and may seem like alternative social work but it is basic class solidarity. Groups can work both ways, building better relationships with other claimants.

The JSA is not as simple as Restart to deal with but it is important to give the managers and supervisors as little opportunity as possible to cut people off or harass them into shit jobs. The "Job Seekers Agreement" you sign when you first sign on is similar to the current availability for work form with a draft form stating how many letters, phone-calls and visits you will make every week. You will have to answer questions on this every time you sign on (in theory. Workers may get bored of this.).

Benefit can be suspended if you fail to attend six monthly restart interviews or 13 weekly in-depth interviews. You've got 5 days to show you had a good reason for missing them. A test match or a trip to Amsterdam are not good reasons, apparently.

The most disturbing new power is that you can be given a "Jobseekers Direction" at these interviews if they think you aren't really trying or if they think a government programme could "help" you. This could be a direction to go on a course, apply for particular jobs or smarten yourself up to look nice for bosses. If you don't comply you could have your benefit stopped for two weeks or four weeks if it is the second time. This can be appealed to an Adjudicating Officer or an appeal tribunal. Getting your story right for an appeal is at least as effective as a rude letter to the tosser who cuts off your benefit. There are grounds for showing that the direction was unreasonable. These range from possible excessive physical/mental pressure, religious or conscientious grounds to travel or other expenses making the job pointless financially.

Claimants groups monitoring overzealous jobsworths should check if a lot of their directions are unreasonable. Appeals etc could cause more trouble than a "final warning" from Groundswell. While we may not be up to these on our own we should at least get sussed enough to get stories straight before going to a CAB or advice centre.

Contact Groundswell for local groups c/o Claimants Action, E. Oxford Community Centre, Princes St, Oxford. Tel: 01865 723750

My boss was more oppressed

SOME PEOPLE MIGHT remember Gus John, alleged hero, who was involved in the "Romeo and Juliet tickets scandal" in Hackney a couple of years ago. Well, Mr John has an industrial tribunal coming up in November where he will argue that Hackney council failed to defend him from "unfair smears" that he is homophobic, and that he failed to tackle racism in Hackney's schools. He will also argue that his employers racially discriminated against him because had he been white they would have defended him adequately.

Oh, the tribulations of the black middle class! How tragic to be denied the right to enjoy the privileges accorded your class to the extent your white peers do. Gus is black, and therefore oppressed; I'm white, working class and bisexual so homophobia's just a product of an overactive imagination caused by my unnatural emotional state.

Back in the real world I occasionally have "conversations" like this:

"You gay, innit?"
"Yeah, you got a problem with that?"
"I don't like gay people."
"That's your problem."
"I kill all gay people. I kill all gay people!"
(2nd teenage shithead:) "Come outside."
"If you're so hard, let's do it here, now."
"I ain't stupid." (Oh yeah?)

At this point I had to ask them to leave, again, and when they refused to, I gave them the choice of going quietly or having an even more rivetting discussion with Stoke Newington Police. It's not just that I'm a queen and calling shitheads' bluff is as hard as I get; I'm not allowed to hit the public at work or on council property. Even on the street, white queen hits black teenager would be read as race attack, not self-defence, and I'd run the risk of summary dismissal. But I digress.

On Page 9 of the 21st July edition of the *Independent on Sunday*, Fran Abrams gave Gus John's side of the story of his 7 years as Director of Education in Hackney. The article portrayed Mr John as the victim of "activists", whoever they might be, enraged by his championship of common sense. The villains of the piece are split between black radicals (independent of his fan club in the Communist Party of Britain) and "the gay and lesbian community" (note the fact that to be queer is to be an "activist").

So, was Gus John really a hero, battling the forces of the loony left? The Independent, which likes to set up as heroes those who share their own class and cultural assumptions, even a black man like Gus, or a gay man like Andrew Sullivan, obviously thinks so.

Our hero implied that he has been portrayed as homophobic simply because he is black, and obviously feels no need to take the charge seriously, or to examine his own actions. There is a direct parallel here with Bernard Crofton's assertion of his "anti-racist credentials" in order to evade responsibility for his "untouchables'" witchhunt against African staff in Housing under the guise of "investigating corruption".

We've got news for you, Gus, your homophobia is not "unquestionable because [you happen] to be an Afro-Caribbean male". It is evident from your actions, and from the assumptions which you made and on which those actions were based.

For those who don't remember, Gus John tried to get Jane Brown, Headteacher at Kingsmead Primary School, sacked because she made an ill-advised comment about heterosexism and Shakespeare. But what really got his goat, according to the Independent, was the relationship between Ms Brown and Nicky Thorogood, who had been the Chair of the school's Board of Governors at the time of Ms Brown's appointment.

This was enough for our hero. In spite of her denial that the relationship had existed until later, Jane Brown had obviously taken advantage of the fact that the Chair of the Board of Governors was another lesbian, and had slept her way into the Headteacher's post. As you do.

Much like anti-semitism, homophobia works on the assumption that shared [non-hetero]sexuality (like Jewishness) equates with conspiracy.

These assumptions are bad enough, but they also fly in the face of the evidence that Jane Brown is a damn good Headteacher, which the school's governors (doubtlessly under the influence of this powerful lesbian conspiracy), parents, and now even the Department of Education (that well-known lesbian stronghold) who have recognised her abilities by appointing her as an inspector, have all acknowledged.

The evidence suggests that Gus John is deeply prejudiced against lesbians,

than me...!

gay men and bisexual people, and assumes that we conspire together to stitch up jobs for ourselves from which to promote our "activist" agenda, and that we falsely accuse those who oppose us of being homophobic to cover this up.

We do not believe that all Afro-Caribbean men are homophobic, nor that this is an inherent part of their cultural background. In fact, we recognise that there are many lesbians, gay men and bisexual people of colour in Hackney, and we are working to improve our services to these sections of the community. It would be a betrayal of them if we were to allow some in their communities, like Gus John and his supporters, to act on their prejudices unchallenged because we may be accused of racism if we do.

Dialogue needs to be established, the taboo - black and white workers do not talk to each other about racism - must be broken.

Gus John claims to have been committed to raising standards of education in Hackney, and that this is the best way to combat racism, and the real equality issue. I tend to agree with him on the latter two points - most people of colour resent patronising "anti-racist" initiatives which focus solely on oppression. What they want is the means to change their situation, without having to be grateful to self-proclaimed saviours. Equality is about being judged according to ability or need, not defined by race (or other "oppression").

So why did Gus John attack the Headteacher credited with the improvements at Kingsmead Primary School? Surely Jane Brown was the kind of teacher he should hold up as a shining example of what can be achieved? No, Jane Brown dared to voice her opposition to heterosexism, and dared to have a love life, she ceased to be a teacher and became an activist.

As an anti-racist I find the way rubbish dressed up in stalinist jargon is passed off as services to black and ethnic minority people depressing. It fits in neatly with the dominant culture of institutionalised racism in Hackney, and only serves the career needs of black middle class stalinists. The smarter, covert, racists must love all this.

Ultimately it makes me angry that money black people fought to have allocated to services which address their needs properly is used by incompetent, self-interested chancers to push their bankrupt politics. Their inevitable failure to meet black people's needs is then attributed to institutionalised racism, which means they need greater authority, (bigger salaries,) and bigger budgets (to waste).

Black people have a tradition of self-organisation which is non-hierarchical, but the logic of the institutions which control public services - the state, voluntary organisations, etc. - means that hierarchies assert themselves when money comes into the equation. A visible anti-hierarchical - ie anarchist - movement has yet to emerge among black people in Britain. Anarchists will only facilitate the emergence of such a movement if we understand the issues.

White liberals handle their racism by handing over responsibility to people as like themselves as possible, rather than by dealing with it. So do trades unions. The power does not transfer, however, so the black struggle moves from being about cultural and institutional change to being about the powerlessness of the black middle class.

The black working class finds itself defined by its middle class "leaders", and cut off from the rest of the (white) working class whom their "leaders" have dismissed as inevitably racist. The white working class only see their black peers supporting obvious crooks. Dialogue needs to be established, the taboo - black and white workers do not talk to each other about racism - must be broken.

There is another story here that no-one is telling, because there is a conspiracy of silence about incompetence in Local Government management. Back when ILEA was abolished by the Tory government - for promoting "loony left" policies - money was allocated to each successor authority - to cover the cost of transfer. Of all those authorities, Hackney alone refused this money. The result? - chaos.

As an officer of the local NALGO branch I watched the maladministration with horror. Particulary spectacular were some of the pay cock-ups. One man was paid his own and his brother's salary one month, and couldn't get the mistake acknowledged, let alone corrected. Many more were not paid at all for months, others were rumoured to have been paid thousands of pounds for a few hours' work by mistake. The Education Directorate never recovered from this bad start, its overspend is the biggest budget problem in the Borough.

I don't hear Gus John complaining he was playing with a rigged deck, so it is reasonable to assume he is responsible for the maladministration. He was the Director of Education for seven years, and picked up nearly half a million quid (before tax) for it. Evading responsibility for the mess would be difficult, so he needs a diversion.

It's all the "activists'" fault, we've ruined his reputation and thwarted his efforts to make Hackney safe for middle class heterosexual conservatives. Somehow we've robbed him of the credit for his success. Very successfully, as it's a success story I haven't heard about, and nor have my black and ethnic minority workmates, who would do anything in their power to avoid sending their kids to most of Hackney's schools.

Peter Principle

Support the Gandalf Six

Up Against the Law

LAST JANUARY 16th 1996, four of *Green Anarchist's editors*, ALF press officer Robin Webb and then-editor of the ALF Supporters Group newsletter (SG), Simon Russell, were raided by cops acting for Special Branch's Animal Rights National Index (ARNI) and charged with conspiracy to incite criminal damage. Maximum sentence: ten years inside.

The Gandalf (G.A.- aND - A.L.F.) defendants' 'crime' is to have published animal liberation news in *GA* or to have somehow been connected to those who have. As police questioning demonstrated, connections may be as tenuous as attending the same rally - along with thousands of others - or perhaps a phonecall.

As the law now stands, the State does not have to prove any damage was done or anyone (even 'persons unknown') was incited or that any 'conspirator' had any connection with such people. Just that it was *intended* that people be incited. This can be over a very long time scale. Five years in this case. A usual defence in cases of incitement is that the inciting material was not circulated - you cannot incite someone with something they have not even seen.

Appended to a conspiracy charge, however, even this defence does not hold. Scrapped manuscripts or jottings locked away on computer discs that have never seen the light of day can still be used as evidence of intent. So can one's associates or beliefs, making this use of the law as contentious as it is political.

It is no use defendants standing up before a jury and saying "Believe us, we didn't want to incite anything". The burden of proof is on the *defendants* and they are being invited to prove a negative too, making conspiracy/incitement prosecutions ideal inquisitorial tools.

What is it all about

This case is the culmination of ARNI's Operation Washington, their attempt to silence Robin Webb as ALF press officer. They have been trying for years, framing him to put him out of circulation on remand or demanding his silence as a bail condition ('to prevent incitement').

It might seem a desperate measure to link him and Si Russell to *GA* - whose animal lib news is more forthright - on the strength of a few phone calls, but this is part of a systematic campaign to make sure if the public hear about animal lib at all it is through the police or media under their control. As well as *GA*, *Liberator* has suffered heavy police harassment, as did *Arkangel* under Vi Smith and Keith Mann and this prosecution is modeled on that used to temporarily suppress *SG* in 1988. Do these people seriously think activists will be less angry if they do not read about animal abuse in a newspaper?

In 1993 ARNI's brief was extended to militant Greens and their scare stories about the ELF ('Environmental Liberation Front' according to them!) have been regularly appearing in the usual dodgy newspapers. As the Criminal Justice Act failed to curb the 1990's protest culture, is it surprising the State is now pioneering a heavier repressive instrument? Many articles cited as evidence in the 5,500 pages the Branch siezed are entirely abstract in their discussion of direct action. Through *GA*, the State seeks to criminalise direct action as a whole.

This is hardly without precedent. Leaving aside the political and religious witch-hunts in the 16th-18th centuries, when conspiracy law came into its own, we have the suppression of the entire extra-parlimentary left in Italy after the conspiracy theories of Prosecutor Calogero held them all responsible for the Moro assassination and an attempt to start the same ball rolling in the UK with the 1979 Persons Unknown prosecution of anarchists. Already, conspiracy law is being used freely in an attempt to suppress such eco-militants as Reclaim the Streets. That is just the start. Currently the only limit is the commonsense of jurors and in the present hysterical law 'n' order climate that does little to banish the spectre of British McCarthyism.

What is to be done?

The six have no intention of presenting themselves as victims. Such disempowering spectacles may satisfy liberals, but do not make revolution. This is not about the guilt or innocence of the defendants or even a bid to make the conspiracy laws 'fair' (i.e. serve the System more efficiently), it is about making the movement strong enough to resist repressive legislation and ultimately abolish the State creating it. If you want to support the defendants, make revolution. If not, remember they are in the front line against this legislation fighting for you. Defending them is just defending yourselves, stopping the law in its tracks before it reaches you. One very specific thing you can do is to prepare to take exactly the action the six are accused of inciting if they are convicted. In that way the verdict incites such action, not this.

Arthur Mix

Contact the Gandalf Six Defence Campaign via BCM 1715, London WC1N 3XX

Their first big meeting was as we went to press on 29th Sept, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1 to form the defence campaign committee.

The first big demo will be outside Portsmouth Magistrates Court on Monday 9th Dec, the first day of the commital hearing.

The Liberation Tour (speakers,video, bands) is from 20th Jan to 1st Feb 1997: •20th Glasgow •21st Lancaster •22nd Liverpool •23rd Manchester •24th Nottingham •25th Wolverhampton •27th Oxford •28th Southampton •29th Brighton •30th Canterbury •31st Cambridge •1st London

N.Y. ANTI -RACISTS ARRESTED

ON SUNDAY APRIL 27th three people were arrested in New Jersey after a confrontation with boneheads at a football match. Among the arrested was a member of Red and Anarchist Skinheads (RASH) and Love and Rage Federation.

RASH regularly go to the football (the real game, not the choreographed ad-man's dream that is American football); and they challenged some boneheads there for wearing swastikas. The boneheads respnded with insults and punches and RASH defended themselves. After the boneheads beat a retreat they were stopped by the police, who got the battered bones to identify the RASH crew.

RASH intends to fight back, both in court but also by exposing the growing racism within the US soccer scene and attacking the hypocrisy of stadium management (who have banned the Irish flag but allowed swastikas!)

Contact RASH PO Box 35, Canal St Station, NY 10013, USA

Czech antifascist charged with murder

PAVEL KROUPA, an active antifascist was travelling with his brother by bus form Prague to Mlada in March this year when a group of five skinheads attacked them. Pavel and his brother fought back and fatally wounded one of the skins; five hours later he was arrested and charged with murder, later reduced to 'excessive defence'.

The preliminary trial will take place early next year and the date will be publicised when known.

There have been benefits organised for Pavel raising $600 so far. The money is being given to Pavel's mother for his support. It will cost at least $900 to hire a lawyer and more money is needed desperately.

Pavel's mother has issued the following statement:

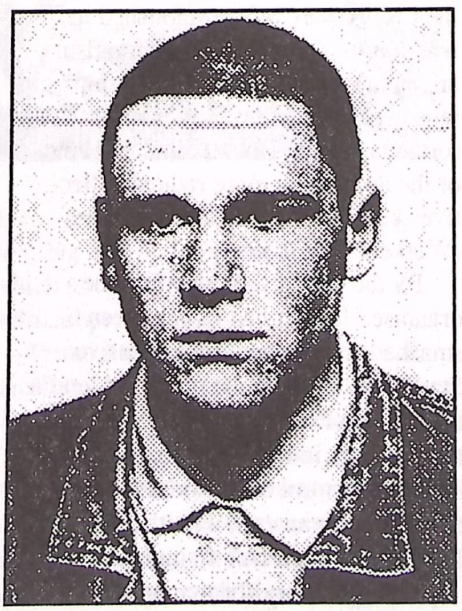
"You don't know who your friend is until the ice you are standing on is broken" , Eskimo proverb.

Dear friends,

Every demonstration of friendship is important and encouraging in our situation. Thankyou to all of you that have opened their hearts for my son Pavel. Your financial help is really important for him and for me, thanks a lot for all the presents. I have been on invalid welfare for a long time and since the divorce with my husband we have been living on the poverty line. But Pavel was modest and brave so we coped. In time when Pavel got a job and moved to the quieter Brno - because of the danger from Mlada Boleslav skins - we had a hope that he could lead a normal life. But everything has been changed by this attack and the death of the skinhead.

Contact Vazebni Veznice Ruzyne, Pavel Kroupa 4.3.77, Praha 6, 161 01, Czech Republic

Donations to POSTBANK Breda Holland giro No. 1699449 (Yvette Lakwijk)



Fascist Murder in Slovakia

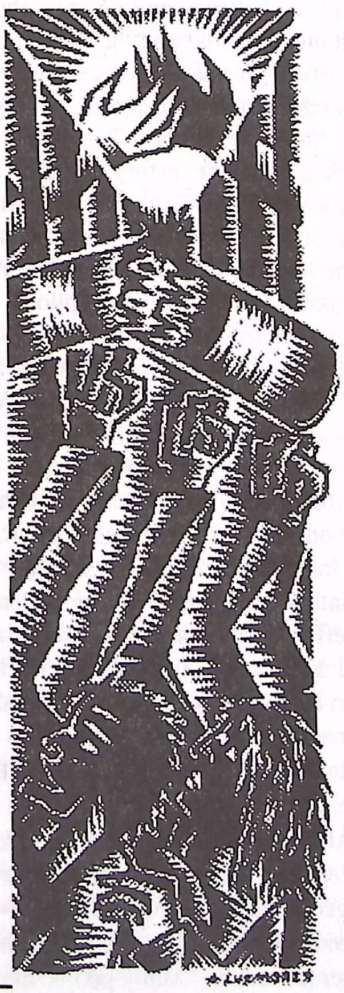
ON 3rd JULY. 18 year old Vladimir died as a result of wounds inflicted by nazi skins. He had suffered brain damage, fractures and kidney failure. The attackers had left him lying on the ground until he was picked up by an ambulance who had been called by a passer by. Attempts to operate failed and he died a week later.

His friends wanted to have a candlelit memorial march but were forbidden by the police.

Antifa Slovakia are trying to find out more information about the case and are asking people to publicise the attack.

"Don't be silent, Don't be indifferent, Indifference is a crime!"

Contact Antifa Slovakia via Marian Dudak, Pribisova 23, 841 05 Bratislava 4, Slovakia
Tel 07 727759



In the Shell of the Old

Italy's Social Centres

Continuing our series looking at solidarity centres, we pulled this interesting article off the internet. We've edited it a little, but it gives an interesting flavour of a country where local centres are much more numerous, and are part of a much more significiant movement than we have here. The potential of the centres is, we believe, emphasised by the act they are linked to local communities, and the individual centres featured here are more than just a home for youth rebellion.

Every May Day since 1986, Forte Prenestino in Rome has hosted the 'Festival of Non-Labour'.

Through music, videos, theatre, good food, and debate, its occupants celebrate not only the coming of Spring, but the ongoing efforts of people like themselves to challenge and overturn the rhythms of capital and the state.

Forte Prenestino covers eight hectares south-east of Rome, not far from the Viale Palmiro Togliatti. Originally built a century ago as a military base, the Forte was abandoned in the sixties like so many of Italy's public buildings in this time of property speculation and public corruption.

Despite recent gentrification, the nearby suburb of Centocelle is still best known for its high levels of unemployment and heroin addiction. When a group of mostly young people from the neighbourhood decided to occupy the Forte on May Day nine years ago, they were inspired not by the legacy of Togliatti - the Italian communist leader who effortlessly blended stalinism and social democracy - but by a determination to establish and extend a radical, self-managed alternative to the marginalisation which life on the city fringes offered.

"All of a sudden, we were inside, 'running' the place - we who had never managed anything except our unemployment, our homelessness", they later commented wryly. "Many people are convinced that the Forte is run by just a handful of people, a management committee that makes decisions in the name of and on behalf of everyone else. Such people simply can't conceive - whether for reasons of ideology or cynicism - that a micro-society of equal persons can survive and prosper..."

Today Forte Prenestino plays an important role in its local community. It houses an exhibition gallery, practice rooms for bands, space for theatrical performances, a dark room, gymnasium, and cafe. Classes are held, there are regular film nights, courses on design and sculpture, and a documentation centre. Outside Rome, the Forte is best known for its music label, featuring local rap and reggae bands. It also produces the journal Nessuna Dipendenza, which documents the Forte's activities and engages in political discussion and debate.

Forte Prenestino is one of about fourteen 'Occupied Self-Managed Social Centres' (CSOA) in Rome. There are about hundred or so CSOA elsewhere in Italy - it's hard to be precise, as any given week brings news of a new site or two established, or an old one evicted. Their origins go back to the mid-seventies, a time when the extra-parliamentary left played an important part in Italian youth culture. Even then, the CSOA were often established in reaction to the growing conservatism and authoritarianism of such groups, whether these be the little parties formed after the Hot Autumn of 1969, or the apparently more radical collectives known as Autonomia Operaia (Workers' Autonomy).

By the end of the seventies, the organised far left had largely been smashed, caught between extensive State repression on the one hand, and a flight into private life or terrorism on the other. In industry, a decade-long battle for control over working conditions came to an end, with the massive 1980 lay-offs at FIAT flagging an impending victory for managerial prerogative throughout Italy.

The CSOA that survived the chaos of those years eked out their existence during the early and mid-eighties as bastions of an 'alternative lifestyle'. 'Transgressive' identities - from those associated with punk music, to more traditional anarchist or autonomist politics - played a central role in holding many of the remaining social centres together, in the face of an Italy where opportunism, fear and cynicism apparently reigned supreme.

The late eighties onwards have confounded many of the glib arguments that class war in Italy is over, or that the future has been reduced to a choice of 'Export or death'. Beginning in 1987 among school teachers and railway staff, a growing dissatisfaction with the inability of existing unions to defend pay and conditions has spread to other sections of the workforce, creating a small but lively current of rank and file groups and 'alternative' unions pledged to direct action and self-organisation. Unrest among school and university students has brought a similar cycle of mass action since 1990, with occupations 'under self-management' a frequent occurence.

Much of this activity has fed into the revival of the social centres in the nineties. As dozens of abandoned buildings have been seized up and down the Italian peninsula, the social and political identity of the CSOA has become richer, more complex. Here are brief descriptions of three of the newer social centres, taken from an account published in 1994:

PIRATERIA DI PORTA is the most recent of the Roman CSOA, and the first to be established in the city centre. Born in December 1993, it is housed in a large warehouse near the Porta Portese Sunday market. With an emphasis upon youth concerns, it offers many activities for children: films, dance classes, martial arts.

In February 1994 it was shut down

by the police, only to be immediately re-opened by the occupiers.

OFFICINA 99 can be found in a former garage in the working class suburbs of eastern Naples. It was first occupied in December 1990 by members of that year's mass student movement (popularly known as Pantera - the Panther) but immediately evicted by the authorities. It was reoccupied on May 1st, 1991, when 500 students and unemployed people marched from the university and took the site over. It is the most active social centre in the region, offering a meeting place not only for younger people, but also for workplace rank and file groups and the local unemployed movement. Its strength lies in its activity within the surrounding community, particularly over the questions of jobs and the fight for a guaranteed income. The first floor of Officina 99 offers a lovely view of Vesuvius, and was used as a location for the film Sud (by Gabriele Salvatores, director of Mediterraneo). The social centre has also spawned the popular political rap group 99 Posse.

BAROCCHIO is a spin-off from another of Turin's CSOA - El Paso - with which its members continue to work. It was occupied in October 1992, on the initiative of a local anarchist group. Both a social centre and a living space, Barocchio is best known for its music scene. For reasons of space, its annual film festivals have been transferred to El Paso.

Two computer networks - the European Counter Network, and CyberNet - play an important role in keeping the social centres in touch with each other but the CSOAs' biggest risk continues to be that of closure. This problem has expressed itself in several ways: among the most immediate, are the difficulties involved in drawing the thousands who regularly attend concerts and other public activities into the daily work carried out by the dozens (often hundreds) of 'regulars'. Beyond this, there is also the challenge of communicating with, and learning from, activists outside the social centres' 'natural' constituency of urban youth. Interestingly enough, some of the more important initiatives taken by many CSOA in recent years have involved questions such as housing, jobs, racism, the lack of parkland in many urban landscapes.

Recently, Bruno Cartosio, a sympathetic observer of the CSOA from an older generation of the radical left stressed the importance of the social centres as practical examples of direct democracy in action. "This doesn't necessarily mean taking the social centres as a model, but rather of seeing, in their structure - in their very existence - an example not only of a necessity, but also of an opportunity from which to begin anew any overall political project".

Primo Moroni, another veteran and unofficial chronicler of Milan's radical scene, disagrees. Whilst conceding that "a formidable transformation" is presently underway within the CSOA, he has expressed some concern that the social centres remain "zones of defence", the product of "a generation which has decided to prolong its adolescence ad infinitum". Perhaps he is right. Or could it be that, in an age when "almost everyone lives in a state of terror at the possibility that they might awake to themselves" (Vaneigem), a self-conscious prolonging of adolescence might yet have its merits?

Adapted from an article by
Steve Wright

DÉMANARCHIE UPDATE

AS WE REPORTED in #208, a wave of anti-anarchist repression has hit Québec. Following a riot on June 24th in Québec City a local group, the World Anti-Fascist League (LAM), blamed anarchists, and in particular the collective who edit Démanarchie. Eighty one people were arrested in the riot, ten of whom are still inside.

Rejecting "all claims of authorship and ownership" of the riot, Démanarchie replied that "the riot belongs only to those who participated in it."

Soon, the raids started. First, Québec City Food Not Bombs, who share a PO Box with Démanarchie were raided and several pot plants siezed. The judge refused to grant bail to "philosophers of anarchy". Two got 2 months and one 3 months in jail, much harsher than usual.

Next a member of Démanarchie was picked up street selling in Québec City. His flat was raided and a computer and anarchist journals were confiscated. He was released without charge but continues to be harrassed by the police.

The same thing happened to a member in Montréal. A coalition of Montréal anarchists and leftists denounced LAM. Berri Street Square, a hang-out for Montréal's punks and dispossessed, witnessed a demo of 200, where the cops arrested an anarchist speaker. Sixty marched to the police station and he was released after a standoff.

On July 29th an illegal demo took place at midnight in Berri Square. AT about 1am riot police rushed the square, eventually making 70 arrests. All were given $116 tickets for being in a public park when closed!

REAL SOLIDARITY IN OZ

ON JULY 5th maintenance workers at ACI Glass occupied their plant in Spotswood, Melbourne. They feared they were about to be made redundant. On the 12th, police forcibly removed them and a picket was mounted. The imagination of the workers in occupying the plant make this more than just a run-of-the-mill dispute against a nasty multinational (ACI is owned by BTR, who you may remember as a prime target for anti-apartheid campaigners a few years ago).

What was particularly striking though, was when the police attacked the picket, over a thousand workers walked off their jobs to come down and support them. Some were directed by their unions, but most heard about it on the radio and showed their support in the most practical way. The pickets are now trying to spread the strike to other BTR plants and get other workers at Spotswood out.

Source: *Rebel Worker*

SOLIDARITY WITH CHILEAN MINERS

ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST comrades in Concepcíon in Chile, are actively supporting the coal miners in Lota and Coronel in their struggle. The mines and the offices of the company have been occupied in protest against a series of dismissals and the possible closing down of the mines. The company is owned by the state. A short while ago, the same locality was the scene of a communal strike that was very successful. The town was closed with barricades and the community held an assembly on the picket of the miners.

Right now, the municipality is trying to negotiate with the government, while the workers and the Union Coordination of Concepcíon - where the anarcho-syndicalists are active - are against any negotiations that don't include as a priority the re-instatement of the workers who were sacked. The Government's aim- besides privatising - is to smash the last remnants of union independence.

The International Workers Association, the anarcho-syndicalist international has asked for urgent support actions, such as demonstrations in front of the Chilean embassy and notes of protest.

The Chilean Embassy is at: 12 Devonshire St LONDON W1, telephone 0171-580 6392.

IWW PICKET BOOKSTORE

THE INDUSTRIAL Workers of the World are currently fighting against Borders Books in Philadelphia (branches all over the US) who fired wobbly Miriam Fried after an organising drive there. Borders went to great lengths to make sure the union certification election was lost, and then fired Miriam, despite her excellent work record. She is pursuing a legal settlement while wobs put pressure on via pickets, in 15 cities so far.

INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO AID AWARENESS LEAGUE

DESPITE CONTINUING efforts by the military dictatorship in Nigeria to silence it, the Awareness League continues to carry out its activities. The AL aims to create a mass movement capable of fighting for self-management and libertarian socialism.

They are up against government repression as well as the poverty caused by the austerity imposed by the dictators and the World Bank and IMF.

The Workers Solidarity Alliance has initiated a campaign to raise US$2000 to buy the League a computer. Help aid the struggle for freedom in Nigeria and throughout Africa. Send donations to WSA-IWA, 339 Lafayette St, Rm 202, New York, NY 10012 USA

POLISH ANARCHIST FEDERATION

THE POLISH Anarchist Federation held its XIV congress in May of this year. Twenty three of the 40 plus groups in the federation sent delegates.

Among the discussions were ecological anarchism, and actions against new roads were planned. Reports of the work of the Polish ABC were also heard. While only a few months old, the ABC has had success with solidarity actions and donations for two imprisoned comrades who are now released.

Their international bureau address is: Biuro Informacyjne F.A.
Skv. poczt 65
76-22155 Tupsk
POLAND

Increasing Repression Against Anarchists In Italy

ON THE NIGHT of September 16th, 300 carabinieri made a series of house raids on anarchists in Italy. Twenty people were arrested and charges were also filed against 9 people already in custody. The raids were orchestrated by the judge Marini, who has stated "I want to arrest some terrorists before I retire".

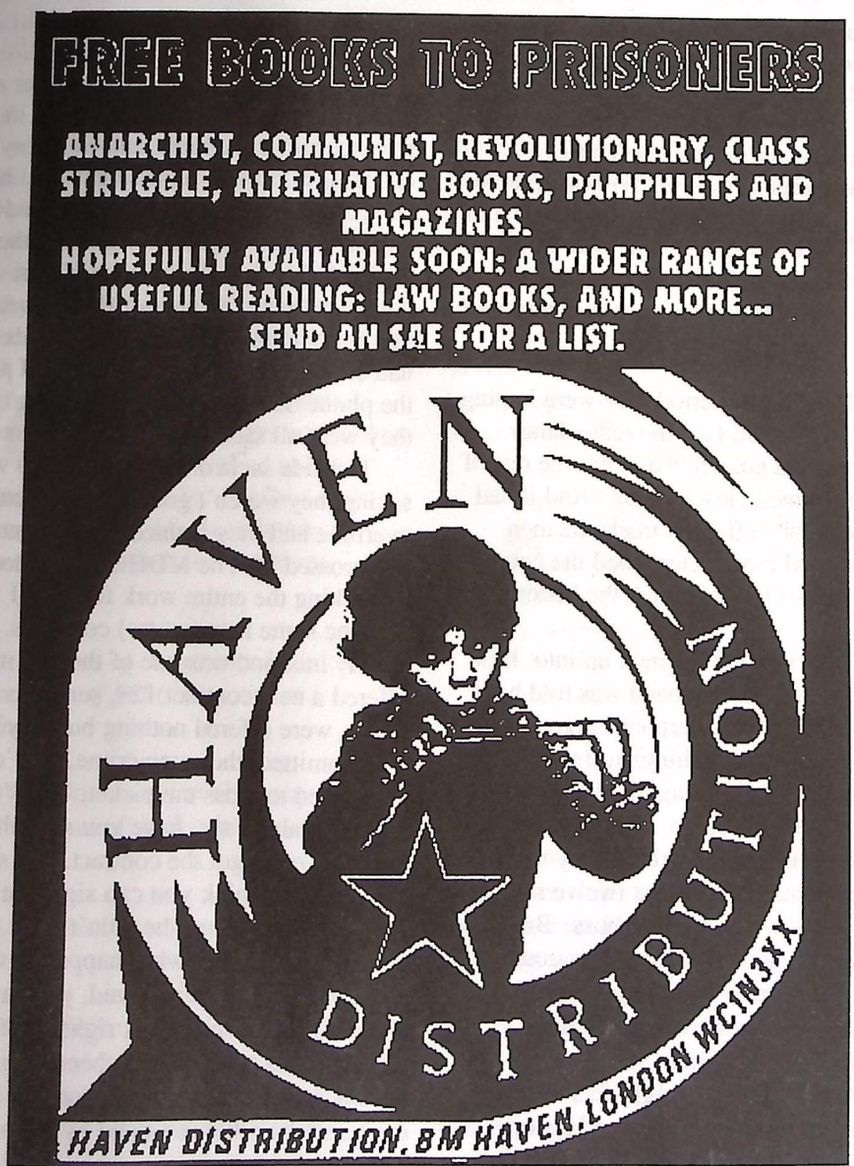
The charges range from membership of a subversive organization, making weapons and murder.

Also of concern is the press release from the carabinieri which seeks to implicate the social and autonomous centres with the mythical paramilitary organisation.

Earlier this year, 4 anarchists were jailed for two bank robberies, which they did not commit, based on the testimony of a state witness. Their friends were among those affected by this latest wave of repression and arrests, including Alfredo Bonnano and the partner of prisoner Antonio Budini.

On November 7th 1996 in Trient, proceedings will begin into the two bank robberies. Many of those people affected by this recent wave of repression were involved in solidarity work around this trial. The anarchist-hating Marini, in addition to "normal" means of increasing repression, wants to see to it that hardly any people are able to attend the trial in Trient.

Contact: Comitato difesa anarchici c/o Elpaso Occupato, via Passo Buole 47, 10127, Torino, Italy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ABC WAR CHEST PROGRAMME

NEW JERSEY ABC have initiated a programme to send regular cheques to political prisoners in the US, especially those who are not receiving other support. Sekou Odinga, currently receiving a monthly cheque, writes "Thanks much for the support you've been organising, I really appreciate it." As well as regular support to those prisoners, there is also an emergency fund which gives to those in need of emergency assistance. Cash or cheques to cash (in US$) to NJABC - BG, PO Box 8532, Paterson, NJ 07508-8532.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

VETERAN ANARCHIST prisoner Harold H.Thompson has been moved. He is now in Turney Ind Prison, Route 1 only, Tennessee 37140-9709, USA

John Bowden has again been ghosted. He's now in HMP Woodhill, Tattenhoe Street, Milton Keynes MK4 4DA

Gerardo C. Ferre, anarchist prisoner and member of *Revuelta*, has been transferred from La Modelo to Brians Prison. His address is now: Gerardo Casanova Ferre, Apartado 500 (Brians), 08760 Martorell, Spain.

Anarcho-Quiz

1. For what imminent controversy was the sixth century monk Dionysius Exiguus responsible?

2. Who was told "..you can shoot innocent persons in batches. But you cannot shoot the truth"?

3. If the Asylum Act was retrospective, what would be the effect on Michael Howard?

4. How did the early socialist and anarchist agitators in the Chilean nitrate mines of the late 19th century get their message across successfully?

5. The British empire was supposedly one on which the Sun never set. According to Alfred Crosby, author of "Ecological Imperialism", of whose empire is this saying true?

Answers on page 29

WOMEN OF THE WATERFRONT

Women of the Waterfront (WOW) are a group of women involved in the Dockers Dispute. They are a wonderful bunch who are putting everything into fighting the Dock Company and supporting the locked out men; pity then that their commitmment was not matched by that of the men when I originally went up to Liverpool to do this interview. I went to the supporters conference, especially to attend the WOW workshop. One women from WOW was able to attend. Why? Yes you've guessed it; the men had promised to do the lunch and the creche but on the day had 'forgotten they were doing it'. The women were in the kitchen and in the creche, and unsurprisingly furious. The interview below with Doreen McNally, chair of Women of the Waterfront, was conducted instead over the phone.

***BF:** Can you tell me who and what are Women of the Waterfront?*

WOW: We're the wives or partners of dockers or others who sympathise, for example wives of retired dockers, as its a community thing the docks in Merseyside.

***BF:** When was the group formed and what was the background to the dispute?*

WOW: We formed the group right at the beginning, within two weeks of the of the dispute. The dispute has its roots in 1989 when the National Dock Labour Scheme was deregulated and there was national strike. When the men finally went back to work they were very demoralised and the MDHC (the Merseyside Docks and Harbour Company) immediately started a vicious demoralisation programme.

My husband for instance, was working in a huge big empty shed on the docks encrusted with centuries of dirt and rat droppings, and they had these men brushing the sheds day in, day out, and then back in again to start all over again. They had them doing this for the best part of a year and then demolished the sheds.

During this period they were hoping the men would take the redundancy money and go; a few did, but the rest of them formed closer bonds. And it had the opposite effect; it made the men closer and more determined the company wasn't going to get the better of them.

They divided the men up into little groups and my husband was told he'd be working for Liverpool Cargo Handling. For a time things went well; the company were less aggressive and we started to feel secure. I thought perhaps we'd been wrong, perhaps they were genuine, maybe the first twelve months was to show us who was boss. But then it started again; 'you sign this contract or we'll go into liquidation, sign this contract or you are on ninety days notice, sign or else... '

And then they bought in Toreside who were employing young lads on worse contracts, and the men said they wouldn't work with them, but the company argued they were apprentices and their pay and conditions would be the same after 6 months. So very, very reluctantly, (it was emotional blackmail, it was young lads off the dole) the men said ok and then, of course in no time, Toreside had taken over their jobs and the Liverpool Cargo Handling men were sent to Seaforth container terminal instead under threat of liquidation.

Things then became much worse; the men only got their rotas a week in advance and a telephone call everyday changing it. It was harassment; you had no social life, one day on my husband's day off we had about 14 calls from the dockboard, you were sat in your own home frightened to answer the phone, you were doing 1471, all your friends had codes, you know ring twice and put the phone down, this was just before they were all sacked.

Toreside sacked the young lads, saying they weren't going to pay them overtime and they formed a picket; no-one crossed it. The MDHC responded by sacking the entire work force and offering some new (worse) contracts.

My husband was one of the 200 men offered a new contract;129, some his mates, were offered nothing but they'd all committed the same crime, they'd all refused to cross the picket. My husband said to me, have you seen this; only 200 of us got the contract, so I said I really don't think you can sign that; he was relieved because he didn't want to sign either. This is what happened with everybody, all the wives said, you can't sign that, because right is right, and we all knew that it could have been one of our husbands and we would have expected the others to stand by them.

***BF:** Why did you decide to work specifically as women?*

WOW: The harassment, the disruption of family life, it wasn't just me, all of the families were putting up with this, but none of us knew each other! So we were sort of getting on with it in isolation, all of us dealing with it in a

different way, some of the women yelling at their husbands 'I'm sick of this you're supposed to be in at 7 o' clock, there's another meal ruined... why didn't you ring....' The children were never seeing their fathers, it was heavy going for the women with young families being stuck at home, alone without any diversion all the time never knowing when their partners would be there; it was soul destroying.

All the women turned up at the first rally, they went to the meeting and the men initially said we couldn't come in as it was their meeting. And I stood up and said, you know whatever the decision, its going to effect our whole families, so it's not just your decision it's mine as well. Realistically we had to do this together.

So I spoke at the first rally about what had been happening, and loads of women afterwards came and spoke to me, and I had women phoning in asking whether I fancied starting a group and I said yeh fine. So we met at Transport House, and we invited people along; we took advice on how to deal with the media and Sylvia came down from Women Against Pit Closures and told us how their group had worked and we learned to network, its usually a male prerogative isn't it but you know, we learned how to do it for ourselves.

BF: *So most of the women hadn't any experience of political activism / organisation etc?*

WOW: No, no-one at all; every one was right out of the kitchen; everyone of us.

BF: *So what have you learned from this?*

WOW: We've learned a tremendous amount, we've learned that out there there are so many groups of women, not just in this country but all over the world who are prepared to get out there and help you, and they've arranged meetings all around the country and abroad. There's been a D notice on this story, none of the national press will cover it, they've told us it isn't of national interest, but you've got 500 men who for 10 months have united dockers globally and they say it's not of national interest! So we have delegations of Women of the Waterfront ready to go to meetings anywhere to raise the profile of the dispute.

BF: *Do you see yourselves as having a more proactive role than just support work?*

WOW: We don't do anything without consultation, we have ideas but we don't act totally independently because at the end of the day the men are the dockers. So we might have an idea which may be controversial and we'll meet with the shop stewards and put forward the suggestion and they'll either agree or they won't. We meet with the shop stewards all the time, we have no secrets, there may be an important meeting and one of us will walk in and no one stops talking, important faxes are as likely to be given to us to deal with as to a steward or one of the dockers.

BF: *Was it like this at the first or did you have to build up this sort of respect?*

WOW: We had to build it up at first, but it happened very quickly because a lot of the stewards knew the value of

women. Mainly it was among the rank and file men that problems arose at first, that took a bit longer, some of the husbands would complain that their wives were always out at meetings / actions, wanted to know where their tea was! But now the men are with us 100%. But at first they would send a man with us to every meeting, rally, action. They'd say 'it's not right you travelling on your own' 'we'd be worried about you' But really we knew that they were checking up on us to make sure we were saying the right things, that we knew what we were talking about, they were nervous, but they were surprised about how much we did know,.

BF: *And they don't do that now?*

WOW: No they don't! They trust us now, they know when we go to meetings we know what we're doing.

BF: *Were there issues that were not being raised before the WOW got involved?*

WOW: Not really no. We're all very politicised now, but none of us were political at all before. You know in Liverpool people are very socially and politically aware, but not necessarily active, and I think it changed a lot of women in that way because our awareness increased and we now have first hand knowledge of social injustices, for example the Hillingdon women, we stood on their picket line and it made us want to do more. So when the dispute is over I think the group will stay together and we will be there to help other women and give them the benefit of our experiences as other women have done for us.

That's how we got off the ground so quickly because other women were there to tell us their experiences and we were able to pick and choose what we thought would work for us

BF: Can you tell me about any actions WOW have done?

WOW: Well we went to the director's home and leafletted the neighbours about the dispute and we wrote to the directors wives appealing to them as women; we didn't get any replies of course. We also wrote to all the main shareholders and told them what was happening here, we wrote to all the main ship owners early on in the dispute, but of course we were aware that they already knew what was going on, they were part and parcel of it all. We felt we had been dehumanised and that's why we went to the directors home with the children; to say these are our kids, this is us, we're real; they came out, didn't bother speaking to us except to say they'd called the police.

We still go quite regularly, to let them know that we're still here and we're not going away.

BF: *Is there any action being taken against the scabs and their families?*

WOW: Well some people have, against the men who worked with our husbands.

We went to their homes because some of the men said they'd only gone back to the job because their wives were threatening to leave them and you can understand that sort of pressure. So we went along and thought perhaps if their wives see that we're all in this together we're all in the same boat and we'll all help each other out; there won't be problems if we all stick together, but we don't do that anymore because we went and it didn't work so there isn't really any point.

***BF:** Wasn't that painful, particularly for those with previous freindships on either side of the dispute?*

WOW: Yes it was, we took on board the fact that maybe someone's wife had threatened to leave with the kids and you've got to feel sorry for them, especially if you are made to choose between your mates and your family. But of course some of them are just selfish, the children of Maggie Thatcher. One of the scabs was saying on local radio that it's great down on the docks but the only problem is that you've got no social life because they're phoning you all the time. And the DJ said isn't this what the dockers were complaining about, and he said well yeah and I know what they're talking about. The DJ asked if he had been unemployed? Because you could half understand some one who was unemployed, but oh no he said 'I had a job but this was better money!' All the scabs in Seaforth had a job, so now I don't have any sympathy for them. And when people say aren't you worried that those there now might lose their jobs I say no; we are all resposible for our own actions; they chose to leave employment to take the food off my table and do my husband's job. So if the port collapses because of the action we're forced to take, they must accept responsibility for that. If they end up unemployed and their families are in the position we're in, they've made that decision and chosen to go down that path.

***BF:** What is your experience of the T&G, because they are not officially backing the dispute; what have they done or not done and what is your attitude towards them?*

WOW: The T&G as far as we're concerned have done what they can within the framework of the law but we feel that the law doesn't apply to us, these men aren't on strike. We don't really understand why they can't go any further, perhaps there's something in the law book.

But we try and stay positive, and because its a lock out situation and not a strike we feel we can be much more creative and are not bound by the union laws. This is one of the strengths of the dispute. Perhaps we're even in a better position because it isn't official. The rank and file are doing their own negotiating and at the end of the day the rank and file will get what they want. Whereas you could be in the position where you put a union bureaucrat in a position of negotiation who could accept a deal on your behalf that you didn't want.

***BF:** I got that impression when I attended the supporters' conference that this was a major strength; the fact that it was an unofficial dispute with minimum opportunity for the union / police etc to interfere with the excuse of union laws etc. You are able to do what you want.*

WOW: Yeah, though I think that would have happened anyway! Overall we don't have any complaints about the T&G; theyre doing what they can within the framework of the law, at the end of the day they're part of the bureaucracy anyway. We don't feel hindered by them.

***BF:** Can you tell me about the recent offer by the MDHC which the men refused?*

WOW: They offered the men £25,000 to go away, but the thing is my husband turned down £35,000 in 1989 as did every other man on the docks, some a lot more. But they've put all of that on the line and you don't do that for nothing. They've put it on the line because it's a matter of principle; they know that if they had allowed the port to get away with what they've done, the young people in this city wouldn't have a future. That's what its all about; my father was a docker, my father-in-law was a docker, all of my cousins were. It's our culture, we haven't any manufacturing industry and as casual workers they wouldn't have any job security, they wouldn't be able to get a mortgage; there would be no security for their families, and this is what the men knew would happen. The only way I can put it is that we are the inheritors of the past and the caretakers of the future. If we hadn't made a stand and fought we would have betrayed our inheritance and we would have betrayed the future.

***BF:** How do you see the future; the dispute seems strong with international solidarity action growing etc*

WOW: Yes we feel very strong and positive; the share prices are plummeting, they're going down daily and we know the second major shareholder is putting pressure on the dockboard. But of course the government is the main shareholder. We couldn't understand why the MDHC were prepared to sit and preside over the decline of not just Merseyside but the decline of the whole of the NW because that's what they are doing. And we had to ask why? Who else is behind it ? The answer is the government. They're trying to break the will of working people and solidarity between workers and Liverpool is the last unionised dockplace. But we are solid and we're not going anywhere.

***BF:** What are your plans for future actions?*

WOW: At the moment there is a bit of a lull because the women and children have been offered a holiday in Poland offered by a guy who'd read the article by Paul Foot in the Guardian. Yesterday there was a social at the dockers' club which was a huge success, several thousand people from the port. There are invitations for the women to do a tour of Holland, an invitation to America and one for France, so we're organising them at the moment.

***BF:** What would you ask other women to do to support you?*

WOW: We want people to publicise whats happening, to spread the word as were not getting national coverage and to ask us to speak anywhere any place at anytime. Also we need funds; that's the most important thing. People are really struggling as it is with the hardship fund; without it we wouldn't have a chance.

Continued next page

Radical Bookshop threatened with closure

HOUSMANS AND the Socialist Workers Party bookshop Bookmarx are being sued for libel for selling *Searchlight* magazine. Writs have also been issued against the printers, distributors and *Searchlight* itself.

The case is one of three brought by Alexander Baron and Mark Taha. The law allows people who are claiming to have been libelled to sue bookshops that have sold the publications as well. Both bookshops will advance a common-sense defence of "innocent dissemination" but the real danger is the cost of the case. Centreprise settled out of court in one case, even though they had not even stocked the issue of *Searchlight*, as they could not afford the legal costs. Housmans and Bookmarx are fighting the case to avoid a further precedent. They have established a fund which will also be used to defend other similar cases.

Bookmarx has the backing of the SWP membership but there are few enough independent radical booksellers left. Housmans is one of the best. Don't let it go to the wall.

Please make donations payable to Bookshop Libel Fund and send it c/o Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road , London, N1 9DX. (tel 0171 837 4473)

W.O.W.

continued from previous page

***BF:** What about actions against related industries, for example Drakes International?*

WOW: Yes; they're strike breakers, they were in the Medway port and at Tilbury and dockers in other countries know about them as well. They're a bit like a hit squad and well known as strike breakers; we welcome actions against them.

Women of the Waterfront can be contacted at Transport House, Lime Street, Liverpool, Merseyside

Tales from the Balustrade

by Emotional Cripple

THE OTHER DAY I hap pened to cycle past a newsagent's and saw this display fly sheet: FREE ARSENAL POSTER. Now what I want to know is who is Arsenal Poster? Where's the demo, and why hasn't anyone given me a flyer? Someone so big as to make the Evening Standard say free 'im, gotta have some clout, eh? You'd think something would've been set up, even if it's to belt hell out of his supporters. Anyway this takes me along to cycling.

The us versus them lobby; yeah, to wear or not to wear, to be seen or not to be seen, to be heard or not to be heard. That, my friends is the question. I quite like bike lanes, I cruise them at night for unsuspecting parked vehicles so I can display my one-handed scratch and sniff the metal and paint dexterity. I don't see the joy in slick lycra bastards. OK, so it's cool and protects your bum, but so does Vaseline, nuff said.

The way I see it is it's all very well but what's it going to lead to, eh? Now, alright, I've got a fucking smart bike but it ain't no connoisseur's; "I've spent all my life finding the right screw heads." Or just walked out of Mosquito with my Dawes" touch. It's just an honest bike and I can see that having certain things can be an asset, like a bottle opener, a hefty D lock for protection (and I don't mean for the bike), a bottle holder for the way home and a set of flashing lights to blind the bastards. You see all this trendy smart stuff is only going to lead to internet cycling, flashing numberplates next, gold-plated cycle railings outside Harrods and fucking Tories giving us status on the roads, "After you wonderful cyclist," "No please, after you dear Bentley driver".

Gone will be the days of a hard ride home, doing battle with the car forces of evil at every light. Squeaking noise abatement societies will spring up, jump out of suburban gardens and measure the size of our ringers. Licences, yeah, you can see it now, queuing at the post office with the Lycra, your bits of paper guaranteeing brakes on both wheels! Car drivers sniggering as you pass having forked out £20 for a hologram which states which roads you have paid to cycle on. X men, (know them?), knee, elbow and shoulder pads? Pessimists, don't you just hat e them? I do. Miserable bastards who sit in corners bemoaning the world, I agree with Mark Steel, "They should be hounded by law".

BACK ON THE MOVE

A Quick Guide to MOVE

by RABBIX

THE ATLANTA and Oklahoma bombings and the siege of the freemen in Montana brought media attention onto the rise of the militia movement in the US. The Oklahoma bombing has been presented as revenge for the feds attack on the Waco compound. The militias are presented both by the establishment, left and right, as the shocking expression of militant anti-government sentiment (and an excuse for further repressive powers and an increasingly right wing agenda), the bombings as some sort of new development, a new turn in American politics. Both of these are of course nonsense. The far right has been bombing, burning and shooting from the moment Columbus arrived. However state repression has always been primarily directed against militant black organisations, regardless of any action they had taken. Compare the Montana stand-off with the treatment of MOVE described below. Compare the headline grabbing of the million man march with the grass roots organising of MOVE and their supporters. Where does the real resistance to the state come from ?

Interviewed by *Black Flag* (BF 206) in 1994 Lorenzo Komboa Ervin, ex-prisoner and author of Anarchism and the Black Revolution, was asked about MOVE:

"Some consider them the first Black Anarchist formation. Regardless of some of the peculiarities of their politics (ie deference to John Africa) their politics are anarchist, including environmental and animal rights platforms, they're against government as an institution, in favour of autonomous communities, co-operative lifestyle and society. The problem has been conservative anarchist purists who refuse to accept it...MOVE were the first organisation since the BPP to advocate black self-defence and I have great respect for them. They have all the essentials of an anarchist political formation."

Every *Black Flag* reader will no doubt recognise the name Mumia Abu Jamal, the former Black Panther, author, celebrated radio journalist, voice of the voiceless and vocal supporter of MOVE. MOVE, as we know is a militant black group that advocates "ecological revolution" but what else do we know about MOVE. What was it that led to their home being bombed on May 13th 1985 ?

MOVE (short for Movement) was born in the USA in the early 1970s. Right from its beginning it was a radical ecological, mainly (though not exclusively) black, no compromise, strict vegetarian, communal living group who only ate raw organic food, watched no TV, educated their own children, shared a common surname, wore dreadlock hair and composted their waste.

Under the teachings of their founder, John Africa, MOVE opposes all exploitation and oppression. Everything from motorway construction to vivisection, animal circuses to state oppression, violence against women to child pornography. "Every problem in the world".

During the early 1970s MOVE was based in Powelton Village, Philadelphia. MOVE members worked hard helping out around their own house and within the neighbourhood. They swept streets, helped homeless people find accommodation, assisted the elderly with home repairs, intervened in gang violence, helped prisoners meet parole requirements etc. One of the fund-raising activities MOVE performed to support

themselves was car washing, this proved very popular. MOVE also ran regular study sessions for people interested in John Africa's teachings. They welcomed dissenting views as a chance to test their oratory skills.

By 1974 MOVE was regularly appearing in public, demonstrating at zoos, pet shops, political rallies, public forums and media offices. On these demos they used nonviolent protest to expose injustice. However during their demos MOVE was met with much police violence. According to their vocal supporter Mumia Abu Jamal, "In 1973 they were in Philadelphia Zoo protesting caged exploitation of animals, and they were beaten for it, they were jailed for it, and got ridiculously high bails for it."

Throughout the 1970s Frank Rizzo was a key figure in Philadelphia's government. A former cop, Rizzo controlled the streets with a heavy handed police force that won national notoriety for brutality. MOVE's response was to run a series of demonstrations focusing on police abuses. Other groups agreeing with MOVE, started their own demos, seeking MOVE's in setting them up. This angered the police which started a concerted campaign of harassment against MOVE. MOVE members found themselves being arrested and beaten, on whatever trumped up charges the police could think of.

Police brutality against MOVE members soon reached an alarming level of violence. On 18.5.74 Leesing and Janet Africa were stopped by the police and rough handled, despite both women telling the police they were pregnant. Both suffered miscarriages. On 29.4.75 during a demonstration against ill treatment by the police, Alberta Africa, who was pregnant, was arrested and taken to a police station. At the station she was dragged into a holding cell, held down "spread eagled" by four cops while a matron repeatedly kicked her in stomach and vagina. Alberta suffered a miscarriage.

On 28.3.76, after seven MOVE members were released from jail, the police turned up at the MOVE home claiming MOVE was creating a disturbance. Without provocation the police turned on the MOVE members, beating them so hard they received fractured skulls, chipped and broken bones and concussion. During this attack Janine Africa was grabbed, thrown to the ground and stamped on. In her arms was three week old Life Africa. Life's skull was crushed. No police officer has ever been prosecuted for the murder of baby Life Africa.

Because of the police harassment MOVE was dragged into the legal system. They readily took on the courts and eventually overwhelmed them by clogging up the system with paperwork. Many MOVE cases were dropped to help clear the backlog and this angered the police, who quickly planned revenge, even more.

"MOVE's work is to stop industry from poisoning the air, the water, the soil, and to put an end to the enslavement of life- People, animals, any form of life." (MOVE).

On 5.11.76, twenty MOVE members were summoned to court. Several were taken into custody. On the way to the holding cells Sheriff Jerry Saunders started to beat up one young handcuffed MOVE member, Dennis Africa. As the police hoped, other MOVE members rushed to Dennis's side and a scuffle ensued. After the scuffle the MOVE members involved were locked up and the police then went in search of other MOVE members. Three more members were arrested and brutalised. This included Rhonda Africa who was nine months pregnant. Rhonda went into labour the next day and gave birth to a bruised and injured baby that died soon after. As a result of the police set up, three MOVE members were given prison sentences.

The setting up of the three MOVE members led MOVE to hold a demonstration demanding the release of their three political prisoners. The demonstration started on 20.5.77 and was held on MOVE property. The MOVE members carried firearms to defend themselves against police attack. MOVE was determined there should be no more undercover deaths. If the police wanted to murder MOVE people they would have to do so in full view of the public. The response of the police was to issue arrest warrants for 11 MOVE members on riot charges and "possession of an instrument of crime". The police then began a 24 hour surveillance operation to make their arrests. This surveillance continued for many months and eventually included a failed attempt to try and starve the MOVE members out of the house.

Eventually, with no other way of getting MOVE out of the house, on 8.8.78 the police launched a full scale invasion of the MOVE house on the grounds that MOVE weren't keeping an agreement MOVE had never agreed to. During the storming of the house MOVE members took refuge in the basement. The fire brigade, in league with the police, flooded the basement with water forcing the adults to hold onto children and animals to prevent them from being drowned. Some dogs did drown. As the water flooded, in tear gas canisters were activated and gunshots rang out as the police opened fire on the building. During this police assault the police managed to shoot one of their own officers, James Ramp. Ramp was killed with a single shot. Three other police officers and three firemen were also injured.

With tear gas, water and bullets, MOVE was forced to come out of their house. 12 adults were arrested, all were beaten by the police. Delbert Africa was smashed in the face with a police helmet and hit with a shotgun butt. Delbert fell to the ground and was dragged across the street by the hair. Other officers then set about him kicking him in the head, kidneys and groin. As soon as the MOVE members were taken away, the police set about destroying the house, flattening it completely.

Out of the twelve people arrested, there were three people who were not well known MOVE members. These three were told if they disavowed themselves from MOVE they could walk free. Consuewella Dotson Africa refused to distance herself from MOVE and was later tried and sentenced to 10-20 years in prison.

Having tried the first three people arrested who were not known MOVE members, the police then turned to the nine who were all well known MOVE activists. Desperate to lock them up, the nine were accused of murdering the cop who the police themselves had shot. After a farcical trial with planted evidence all nine were found guilty of murder and sentenced to 30-100 years. The next day, whilst appearing on a talk show, the sentencing judge was asked , "Who shot James Ramp ?" He replied "I

have no idea".

During the next seven years the persecution of MOVE continued. This included another nine MOVE members being accused of terrorist activities: charges that were completely bogus. Despite the harassment MOVE continued to demand the release of their political prisoners. By this time MOVE had a new communal house in Osage Avenue and fearing more police assaults they decided to fortify the building.

On 11.5.85 arrest warrants were issued for four MOVE members on terrorist charges. A fifth person's warrant was signed for gun violations. On 12.5.85 police evacuated Osage Avenue and towed away cars. On 13.5.85 at 06:00 hours, over 600 police launched a military style assault on the MOVE home. Armed with tear gas, water cannon, shotguns, Uzi's, M-16s, silenced weapons, Browning Automatic Rifles, M-60 machine guns, a 20 mm anti-tank gun, a .50 calibre machine gun and 37 pounds of C-4, a powerful military explosive. Between 06:00 and 07:30 hrs the police fired 10,000 rounds of ammunition at the house. They also tried to blast through walls using the C-4 explosive. When these measures failed, a state helicopter was used to drop a bomb onto the roof of the building. A fire started, which was allowed to blaze out of control, eventually destroying 60 other buildings.

With their home ablaze the MOVE members tried to flee. But as they did so they were shot at by the police and forced back into the burning house. Those that chose not to be burnt to death were gunned down outside the house. Six adults and five children were inside the house at the time of the assault. Only one adult (Ramona Africa) and one child (Birdy Africa) survived. Both were taken into custody. Birdy was subjected to a "normalisation" program which included being force fed Muckdonalds burgers. Ramona went to jail for seven years charged with conspiracy, riot and multiple accounts of assault.

The bombing was intended to end MOVE once and for all. However this has failed. MOVE continues to exist and in 1991 they purchased a new communal house on Kingsessing Avenue. Several months passed before the police learnt about this new house. Once the police knew of the new house, media slurs started against MOVE and there is a real fear MOVE may be attacked again.

There are currently nine MOVE members in prison in AmeriKKKa. All nine are serving life for the murder of the cop shot on 8.8.78. All nine are innocent.

CAHRLES SIMS AFRICA, AM4975, SCI-Gaterford, PO Box 244, Gaterford, PA, 19426-0244, USA.

DEBBIE SIMS AFRICA, 006307

JANET HOLLOWAY AFRICA, 006308

JANINE PHILLIPS AFRICA, 006309

MERLE AUSTIN AFRICA, 006306

all at : SCI-Cambridge Springs, 451 Fullerton Ave, Cambridge Springs, PA 16403-1238, USA.

DELBERT ORR AFRICA, AM4985, SCI-Dallas, Drawer K, Dallas, PA 18612.

EDWARD GOODMAN AFRICA, AM4974, SCI-Camp Hill, PO Box 200, Camp Hill, PA 17011-0200, USA.

MICHAEL DAVIS AFRICA, AM4973, SCI-Gaterford, PO Box 244, Gaterford, PA, 19426-0244, USA.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS AFRICA, AM 4984, SCI-Dallas, Drawer K, Dallas, PA 18612.

"As long as we are alive, we will never abandon our innocent brothers and sisters in jail, and they know that we will never abandon them, and this city gonna always have a problem until every last one of our brothers and sisters is home." (MOVE)

For more information about MOVE contact either:

The MOVE Organisation, PO Box 19709, Philadelphia, PA 19143, USA.

Friends of MOVE , PO Box 3069, London, SW9 8LU, England.

Or better still write to any of the MOVE prisoners. They welcome letters and are more than willing to answer questions.

International Women's Conference

Summer 1997, Sweden.

Below is a communique from the International Women's Conference Group of the Swedish syndicalist SAC.

Sisters!

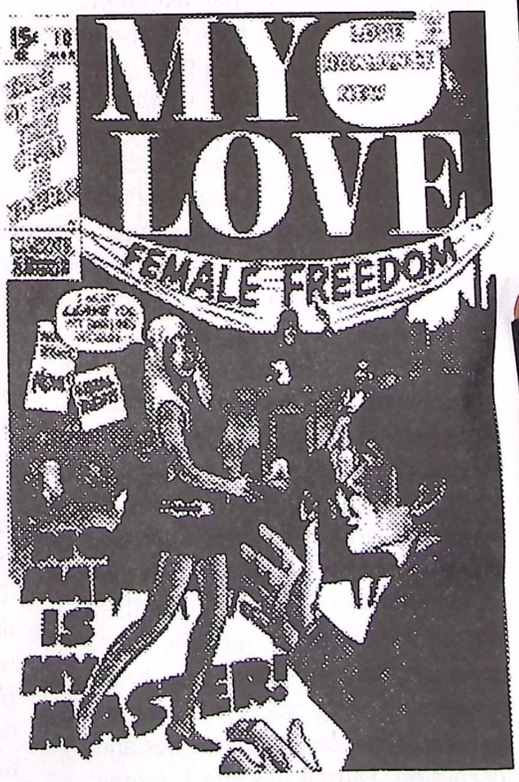
Our aim is to work for a social revolution; history shows that efforts so far to improve conditions of life have rarely been concerned with improving the condition of women. Patriarchy is older than capitalism, but we are determined to work for a social revolution worthy of the name.

To further our goal we are organising an international conference in the summer of 1997. One reason we are planning this conference for women within the libertarian movement is because it is always men who have the most influential positions, especially on an international level. One glance at the syndicalist and anarchist movements shows this. This of course is a minor problem if one is blind to gender politics.

In recent years many women in the SAC have become more interested in this area. An annual womens' seminar has been held for several years. This years' seminar in September is on international trade union solidarity.

Next year's conference will be held near Stockholm, with two days of discussion and two days of practical workshops.Contact the group at:

Örebro LS, Sturegatan 6B kv, Örebro, Sweden, Tel +46 19 - 10 60 65



Germany censors radicals on the Internet

THE MEDIA HAS been saturated lately by stories of child pornography and organised crime on the internet, followed swiftly by calls for its control. But behind this smoke screen lies a hidden agenda of censorship and regulation. The fact that there is a medium through which people can exchange information and ideas free from interference from the State or other busy bodies cannot be tolerated. The only thing which has prevented intrusion so far has been the pressure exerted by the millions of people on the internet and the technical problems presented by large scale censorship. However, the threats to free speech is constant and getting ever more confident.

China has always had a policy of Internet censorship, but because so few people have access there, this has been easy. The censor is now striking closer to home.

Radikal, a magazine produced by German ultra-leftists to act as a forum for 'discussion of street militancy and armed struggle' has had a long history of harrassment by the German State. It eventually went underground and was also published on the World Wide Web (WWW). On 2nd September the Dutch Internet Service Provider XS4ALL who hosted the *Radikal* Web pages received a phone call telling them that the German authorities were planning to force all German Internet providers to shutdown all traffic to and from XS4ALL. This has since been enforced.

The Internet community responded by copying the site to more than 40 other locations to maintain access for the German public and XS4ALL have no intention of removing the *Radikal* pages. There was a demonstration on the Dutch-German border on 21st September where *Radikal* was openly sold. The ban at the moment seems to have been circumvented, but only at the expense of XS4ALL. That the German state felt confident enough to attempt the exclusion is more worrying. With much talk of legislation in the UK and the States any attempt to undermine free speech on the Internet must be resisted vigorously.

XS4ALL can be found at http://www.xs4all.nl

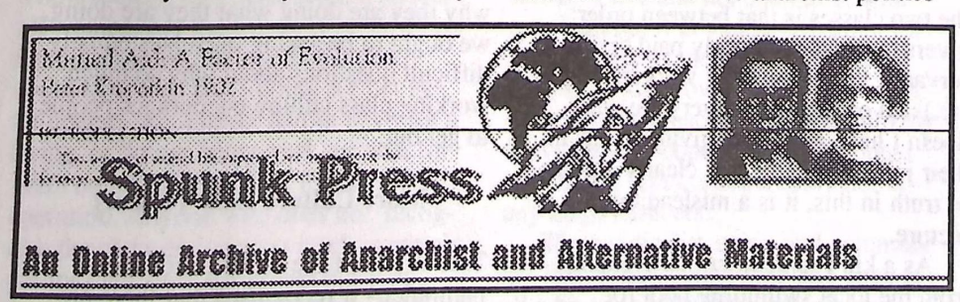
Anarchist Web sites

THE INTERNET has allowed the dissemenation of anarchist news, information and history on a scale never before seen. The following is a very brief guide to some of the resources available. It is meant to be a starting point from which people can explore. As is to be expected there is a lot of pseudo-anarchism to be found, but this is outweighed by the many sources of solid anarchist propaganda.

Spunk Press is an independent anarchist publishing project with the specific intent of making an anarchist archive freely and easily available. They actively encourage editors and writers to convert their works into an electronic format and have a wide-ranging catalog of resources covering all aspects of anarchism. They also have an extensive contacts list.

The Workers Solidarity Alliance home page is a good example of a propagandising Web site. It is clear and concise with a balance of news, campaigns, syndicalist history and a large list of international contacts.

The Workers Solidarity Movement in Ireland host a page with introductory texts for those new to anarchist politics or coming to it from a 'left' perspective. It also carries a series of articles on Irish politics and more links to other anarchist sites and groups.



Spunk Press:
http://www.cwi.nl/cwi/people/Jack.Jansen/spunk

WSA
http://www.dorsai.org/~agony/wsa.html

WSM
http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/2419

AINRIAIL

Irish Anarchist bimonthly

50p from PO Box 505, Belfast BT11, Northern Ireland

Originally based in Galway, this new series of Ainriail aims to come out every 2 months. This issue features articles on the recent Northern Ireland elections, No Bosses - Orange or Green!, Anarchism and the economy and crime. Although short, it is well put together and well worth a read for those anarchists who uncritically worship the republican movement. Not sure about the orange cover, though.

Mailing Lists

For those with e-mail, but no access to the Web, mailing lists act as a way to keep informed on news and also enter into discussion.

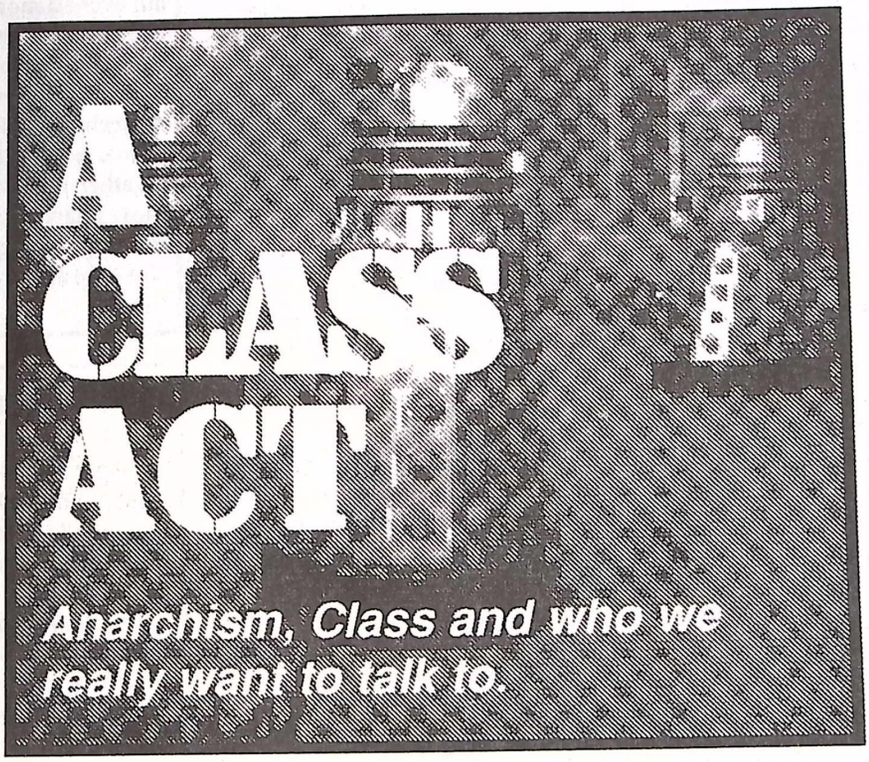
A-Infos Mailing List
Subscription address:
Majordomo@LGLOBAL.COM
(send 'Subscibe A-Infos' as the message).
News and reports for anarchists.

IWW Mailing list
Subscription address:
Majordomo@igc.apc.org
(send 'Subscribe iww-news' as the message) International Workers of the World news and discussion

AIT/IWA Mailing List
Subscription address: AIT-IWA-list-request@list.lever.com and put subscribe in the subject line. News from the International Workers Association.

THIS ARTICLE STARTED out as a review/ response to the pamphlet *Educating Who About What - The Circled A and Its Parasites*. Once I started getting into the issues, though, it took on a life of its own. I hope this provokes some debate. The pamphlet begins with the statement "90% of the Anarchist Movement is a Joke" and goes on to blame middle class domination of anarchist organisations for the fact that the people anarchism is from and for don't get the message. What I want to do is look at why those people don't get the message, whose fault it is, and to look at issues of class, culture, identity and organisation as a whole.

For a pamphlet which puts down situationism so neatly - "criticising society in the language of the privileged" it is irritatingly laid out in different typefaces, styles *and sizes*, so that it looks ***LIKE*** *this*, very arty but a pain to read (it reminded me of the 80s **popstars** who wrote their names with **capitals** and normal letters reversed - **bOLLoCks**, if you ask me).



What is the middle class, so despised by the pamphleteers? Well, they don't define it. The sort of middle class attacked here are the "radical" types, who, to be fair, are an easy target. In my experience, the "radical" middle class always live in bohemian areas, anywhere where real people live is just too dull.

Most of the middle class doesn't live in inner cities - they live in the posher bits of every town and city in this country. We are not likely to come into contact with them much, except as bosses, bank managers etc, unless we mix with them socially. Yes, I find the bohemian types slumming it for a few years before they return to their overflowing trough irritating and destructive to getting any real organising done politically. But they're an obstacle in the way of getting at our target, not the target itself.

The pamphlet's writers advocate a purely working class organisation to solve middle class domination of anarchist politics. But, they don't define the working class either, so we get no idea of who decides who fits in a "working class" organisation? I have a good job, a mortgage, I like to use my intelligence and I'm working class.

Many of our class cannot be defined by work, because they haven't got it. Increasingly there are all sorts of barriers between those of us who do have jobs and those without. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the DSS and Department of Employment. On the one hand, there are working class people expected to "seek" non existent jobs by poorly paid working class people, a lot on temporary contracts, and not very far from the same situation. There are still some workers in good situations - usually those who are well unionised or where there is a genuine shortage of their skills in the labour market (certain types of computer programmers spring to mind as well as train drivers, airline pilots and engineering workers). Some would argue that the difference between the two classes is that between order givers (such as our poorly paid civil servants, teachers, social workers, cops etc.) and order takers (everyone who doesn't have any order-giving status in their job). While there is clearly a germ of truth in this, it is a misleading picture.

As a kid I remember being banned from the local swimming pool for staying in for three hours. The worker there told me I was "defrauding the council". He was giving orders, to me, a small child, because he had the power to do so. He had no power to order anyone else about, as he was just the changing room attendant. It was something in his psychological make-up that made him do it. Whether teachers are middle class or not is a debate that goes on and on. In purely economic terms, they're nearly all working class. Like the rest of us in work, they're only a few months pay packets away from poverty on the dole. The pamphlet calls this a cartoon view of the world, in that it simplifies the class relationships and misses some of what's going on in there.

However, the pamphleteers' version of the world does the same, only from a different angle. Bloody teachers, etc, - they have a limited amount of power and can give orders to kids, therefore they are middle class. Some teachers are bullies and take full advantage of the power they have over kids. But most are just people trying to do a job as well as they can within the restrictions placed on them - like class sizes, national curriculum full of bollocks, kids with no future, no books etc.,. The key issue here is power, and an anarchist approach has to be one of minimising any concentration of power and recognising cultural differences within the working class. Many of the "middle class teachers, social workers and civil servants" wielding this power "over" the working class are people (usually women) who have escaped the drudgery of a small-minded working class culture. As well as asking them difficult questions about why they are doing what they are doing, we ought to be asking ourselves equally difficult questions about why so much working class culture encourages people to get out.

More Culture than Yoghurt

This is one of the strengths of the pamphlet - it recognises that there are

working class cultures which are diverse and have different strengths. This is something we need to promote otherwise many talented working class kids will seize any opportunity to join the middle classes. These are the people in previous generations who filled the shop stewards' and convenors' jobs, acted as barrack room lawyers on their estates and stirred things up against the council, the boss or whatever arm of bureaucracy was interfering in their lives. We can't afford to lose them, and to keep them we have to show that there are alternatives within the working class. I remember talking to a woman brought up in a pit village who desperately wanted to be middle class. She saw middle class women with more control over their own lives than those of the women from her village. I suspect she'll be disappointed with the class to which she aspires, but decades of lionising of the miners by the left meant she identified that as ***the*** working class way to live, not merely ***a*** working class way of life.

To give another example of where we need to be critical of elements of working class culture, many out of town estates were hit by riots over the last few summers. Bored young men (and it was nearly all young men) had pitched battles with the police, stole cars, looted shops and set fire to community centres. The effect of this on other members of the community - who are no less working class - is often ignored by anarchists cheerleading for anyone having a bash at the cops. But the shops and community centres are vital to the rest of the community, the pensioners, those without transport to go to the shops in town, the single parents (overwhelmingly women) who use these facilities for mutual support, maybe a creche etc,. Anyone with an opportunity is going to get out of that estate, but why should they have to leave our class? There is a danger in mixing up class and identity too much, so in affirming their own identity, people must reject their class.

On a better point, I totally agree about other struggles, such as anti-racism and anti-sexism. Class is the most important factor in the struggle for a new society. Of course sexism affects all women, but the Queen Mother (bless her!) gets to 94 and the media gush about how well she's doing for her age. Of course, she's never had to work for a living, or do the housework, or wait for years on an NHS waiting list for a hip operation. Anyone who does not recognise the class divisions at work is merely out for their own advantage (such as those women who want 50% of all MPs to be women, as if it will make a blind bit of difference to anything other than their careers) and as the pamphlet rightly says, they have no place in our movement. The opposite is also true - any anarchist who thinks it's OK to be sexist or racist, even using the excuse of "it's part of working class culture" should get short shrift from us.

On Organisations

The pamphlet is very critical of organisations, harping "Where are your members?" Why do anarchists then continue to try to form organisations, if no one is joining? I am not going to answer this question, except to say that people will always organise to achieve their aims. The problem with most anarchist organisations is their aims are so distant their purpose becomes blurred. The point of organisation is to improve your prospects of winning and facilitate collective action. Another trouble with anarchists in this country is that they get jealous of the Trots, even though we shouldn't be trying to replicate them as they don't share our aims.

Trot parties mirror the state they want to set up and control - with the rank and file paper sellers being the working class, the middle class consisting of branch organisers and full timers and the ruling class consisting of the leadership and central committee. They even go so far as to discuss getting a "few of the younger comrades arrested" when the need arises, like generals committing troops to battle. It might work, though evidence for this is scanty, but anarchism it ain't.

I am only interested in looking at two forms of anarchist organisation - the affinity group and the syndicalist union and commune (I have put these together for reasons which I shall explain). There are of course, others, such as the much tighter political group advocated by the Anarchist Communist Federation and the Workers Solidarity Movement in Ireland, where membership depends on agreeing with aims, principles *and* policies.

The affinity group is based on shared belief and other close ties, friendship, socialising and so on. It is obviously self-selective and not open to general membership. It is vitally important for direct action as the members of an affinity group grow to learn from each other and trust each other. It is unlikely to win many people to anarchist ideas on a direct basis, and certainly not in any large numbers.

The syndicalist union and commune are libertarian, democratic and open to all who are part of their constituency - either workers in that industry or people who live in that area. By their nature they are working class bodies which can include all the workers. Indeed, modern anarcho-syndicalism has improved on the classical model by moving on to the syndicalist union advocating and calling "workers assemblies", sovereign decision making bodies open to all workers who accept their decisions as binding, regardless of union affiliation. (This is usually conveniently forgotten by Bookchin and other critics of syndicalism who really should know better).

We often come up against the "spontaneity" argument here. You know the sort, there's no need to organise workers, they will organise themselves when the need arises, spontaneously, and will be more revolutionary without unions, parties or ideologies to hold them back. This argument simply doesn't wash, and asks us to deny our own existence as workers. It's OK for the workers to do it, but not the anarchists. But aren't the anarchists workers too? Organisations can be sapping and contradictory at times, but it is through the experience of organising that lessons are learnt and digested.

These two models are not contradictory, it's simply a matter of recognising different tactics; you can go out there and "just do it" as the ad goes, or you can build a long, steady fightback by gaining respect from those immediately around you, and hopefully some of our ideas will find an echo in their experience. The point is to see that an active anarchist movement usually benefits from an active libertarian workers movement, and vice versa.

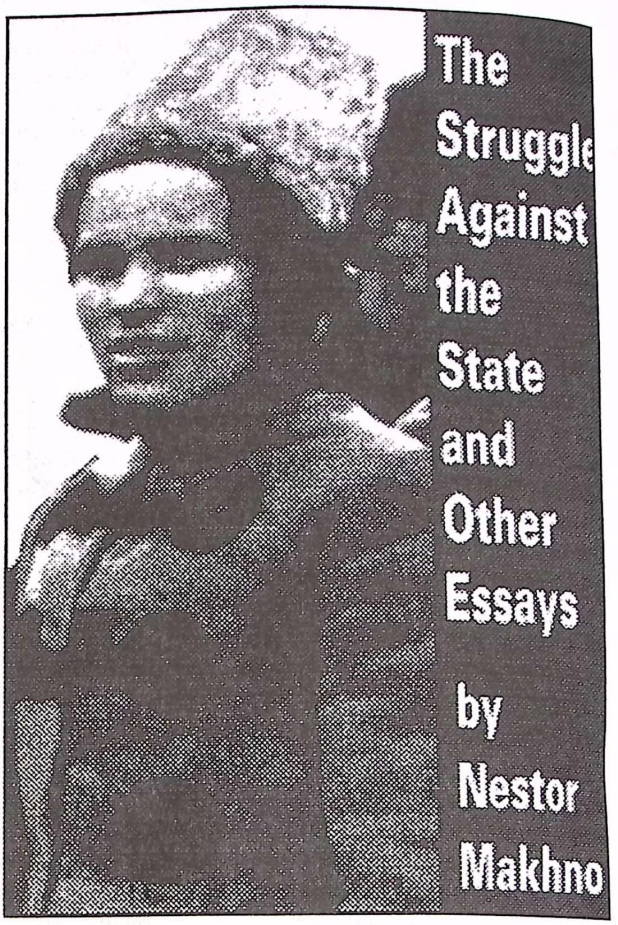
Minor targets

A good chunk of the pamphlet is taken up on attacking Chumbawumba and praising Pulp for their connectedness to working class culture. The points made are valid enough, and I prefer Pulp myself, but **they are only pop stars.** Pop stars are not going to change the world. Crass played the same role in the late 70s early 80s as Chumbawumba do now. I am one of the few anarchists of my generation who wasn't into punk, but I am glad it got loads of people interested, even if 99% have since fucked off, there are some real gems in that 1%. If Chumbawumba can do the same, good. If not, who cares?

MH

Educating Who About What - The Circled A and Its Parasites (£1 from Black Economy Books, Dept 8, 1 Newton St, Manchester M1 1HW).

The Struggle Against the State and Other Essays by Nestor Makhno; edited by Alexandre Skirda. AK press.



NESTOR MAKHNO remains one of the most elusive and myth-ridden figures of twentieth century anarchism. For the first time in nearly sixty years eighteen of his own essays have been brought together in this anthology throwing Makhno into new light as an individual thinker and revolutionary.

In his own words Makhno lays out his thoughts about the Ukrainian revolutionary movement, its successes and failures. He also confronts head-on the allegations of anti-Semitism that were laid against Makhno and the Makhovshchina with the genuine anger of someone falsely accused. Makhno had learnt his anarchism from a Jew, spent the last twenty years of his life drinking himself to death in a Jewish Anarchist Club in Paris and included the late Leah Feldman along with many other Jewish anarchists in the Ukraine as his confederates. Indeed most information concerning anti-Semitism among the Makhovshchina is documented by Makhno himself, who points out that those found to be responsible of anti-Semitism were shot out of hand. Even last year the SWP were still pumping out the lie that Makhno was an anti-Semite. Certainly Makhno took the allegation seriously enough at the time to refute it and demand proof, any proof, of organised anti-Semitism in the Ukraine by the Insurgent movement. Seventy years down the line the evidence of this foul slander remains non existent.

Makhno did not write entirely about the past, rather he sought to pass on to the next generation of revolutionaries his experiences and the lessons of the failure of the libertarian movement in the Ukraine. His experiences had given him particular insight into the revolutionary process, the failure of the Russian anarchist movement to offer genuinely effective aid or support to the Makhovshchina, (the Moscow Anarchist group for instance were too busy practising Free-Love, to carry through the revolution or support their comrades in the Ukraine) and a deep and abiding distrust of anarchist intellectuals.

His relevance in being a link between the Russian Revolution and the Spanish Revolution is borne out in the last two essays both originally published in 1931 addressing the Iberian anarchist movement in the light of his own experiences. This book is excellent if you are a Makhno buff but is unsuitable as an introduction to Makhno or the Makhovshchina. It does however have a real relevance beyond Makhno in that it addresses problems which again and again in Britain let the Anarchist movement down - a constant ability to be side tracked from the real issue, a lack of revolutionary discipline and fragmentation. The last of these led Makhno to flirt with Platformism, almost an Anarchist Party ideology, while he did finally reject Platformism his thoughts on how Anarchism must progress does make relevant and highly stimulating reading today. The only real criticism of the work is the price, at £7.95 it is a bit steep and a wee bit over produced. AK does deserve a pat on the back for this particular publication, certainly a bit of a change from some of the bollocks they have recently been publishing. (*steady on! they are our paymasters -ed.*)

DM

Come In Mr Icke, Your Time Is Up.

Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience. Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier.
AK Press. £5.

TWO ESSAYS, one on the "green" roots of the Nazis and one on the rebirth of racist politics and the "fuhrer" principle in the German green movement. The first is an account of different "green" strands and how they both contributed to and were co-opted by National Socialism. The "wandervogel" was a youth movement of back to the land long hairs, into eastern mysticism and neo-Romanticism. Didgeridoos had not reached the fatherland at that time. Some of them went to the left, most were absorbed into the NSDAP. Even in power the Nazis were committed to sound green policies with nature protection laws and a commitment to organic farming and an enthusiasm for eco-mysticism.

The second piece looks at the influence of these same currents in the post war and modern Green movement in Germany. It spotlights the shift of former leftist Rudi Bahro to his (sad)

Against Reality- Me and the Unabomber Against the World.

Industrial Society and Its Future- the Unabomber Manifesto.
£1.50 from Active Distribution

THERE ARE AT least 3 versions of this going about. The one to get has got to be the edition by *Green Anarchist* as it has a well written and enthusiastic introduction by GA and better still a piece by anti- technology anarchists "autonomous Anarchists Anonymous" from Oregon. This second piece slags off other US anarchist groups (Love and Rage and Slingshot) for not welcoming the Unabomber to their arms. Fair enough in some ways: criticising the bombings for inviting repression on anarchists is plain naive, criticising the Unabomber as a "murderer" is slightly hysterical. This doesn't cover the fact that a shopkeeper, albeit the manager of a store selling computers (!), might not seem on first glance a legitimate target any more than a record store owner or a publican. Graduating in maths might also seem to qualify you for a letter bomb. However, the enthusiasm that GA and others seem to have for these attacks is far more naive than the kneejerk reactions from leftists and anarchists. It is only when you read the manifesto itself that you get a real sense that there are no politics involved here anyway and, yes, the bloke is a complete nutter.

The basis of the manifesto is quite reasonable and utterly predictable. Technology is evil (a word used a lot), unreformable, not neutral in any way. Most of the manifesto deals with the depersonalising and alienating aspects of technology rather than the economic/ political side of industry. Much of the rest is an attack on "leftism" which means liberals and those who look to the establishment for solutions.

The first signs that someone isn't playing with a full deck are the constant references to we or "FC". This refers to the Freedom Club, the unabomber's "group". Not even the US primitivists seem to think that there is more than one person involved but FC discuss everything amongst themselves. Either it is the royal we or he has a lot of imaginary friends.

The references to anarchism that have so excited all of us fall a bit flat. There are constant references to "welfare leeches" and to the "unthinking majority" (people who don't agree with him). "History is made by determined active minorities". Napoleon complex or what. Though arguably he could have got that from Bakunin as easily as from spending too much time on his own.

My favourite paragraph from the Unabomber manifesto is paragraph 204 where it says "Revolutionaries should have as many children as they can. There is strong scientific evidence that social attitudes are to a significant extent inherited....no one denies that children tend to hold social attitudes similar to those of their parents." Sadly, if the man turned in by his brother is "FC", this was not true enough.

search for a new "fuhrer". This part of the essay is marred by too much emphasis on a row between Murray Boochkin and Bahro more suited to the gossip pages of *Black Flag* than to a book. However Bahro is not alone in his red, green, brown (or turquoise) political trajectory.

The lesson of both essays is that ecology is as much a part of the fascist right as the libertarian left. If any sort of mysticism or mystification is allowed to dominate it the tendency is to the right. The adoption of of green politics by far right groups and the presence of dubious nutters in the green movement (ranging from Icke or "Alternative Green" to Peter Cadogan) are both to be expected. This book is a well argued clear account of why this is the case now.

13th Monkey

SLEAZE, LIES AND VIDEO TAPE

MPs in Westminster can look forward to Fat Cat life styles to go with their Fat Cat pay cheques. Work is currently under way at the Palace of Westminster and around Westminster Tube to refurbish 210 MP's offices. Each office will contain an oak-panelled multimedia cabinet with a TV and video recorder. Presumably so they can catch Corrie or Eastenders when they are in the House earning that 26% pay increase. Unfortunately the period style oak cabinets were designed in such a way that no standard model TV can fit inside them, so non-standard size sets are being specially manufactured at £3000 each, a cool total of £630,000 of taxpayers' cash just for the TVs! Plans to include the TVs and cabinets in a further 106 Members' rooms, for a further £318,000, are yet to be confirmed.

The Wee Man is Dead!

ROBERT LYNN HAS SNUFFED IT. In the heart of Glasgow - the Calton - hundreds of people are genu inely mourning the loss of one of its best loved sons.

Born in the Calton in 1924 Robert went on to be educated at St. Mungo's Academy. Leaving school at 14 years of age he took up an engineering apprenticeship in the shipyards. Already possessing an awareness of class consciousness he was swept up in the maelstrom of political activity during the war years in engineering and the shipyards. The 1943 strike on Tyneside, which saw Jock Haston and Roy Tearso imprisoned, quickly spread to the Clyde where many shipyards were brought to a halt. Robert worked in Yarrows as an apprentice and became actively involved in the struggle to better the wages and conditions of his colleagues - a battle that had to be fought and refought in ensuing years.

During the second world war the Communist Party dominated the influential shop stewards' committees but their policy of subordinating the workers' interests to those of Soviet Russia drew a withering fire from Anarchists, Trotskyists and non-Communist Party socialists alike. This experience had a profound effect on Robert and it was then he began to nurture the beliefs of Bakunin and the industrial strategy of syndicalism.

In the post-war years Robert's influence in shipbuilding became increasingly irritating to both employers and communist-led union officials, so he was "blacklisted" with the approval of both. Unable to get work he then joined the Merchant Navy as an engineering officer and spent some years seeing the world and its peoples. He devoured libraries and enveloped the beliefs of syndicalism and the conscious egoism of Max Stirner.

Returning to Glasgow in the early fifties he threw himself into everything; politics, marriage, and trade union activity. He became an active member of the Glasgow Anarchist Group of Frank Leach, Jimmy Raeside and Eddie Shaw, who were already well-respected names in anarchist circles. The Glasgow Anarchist Group was the only group in the world where the egocentric philosophies of Max Stirner took root and were given popular expression. The anarchists held an open workers forum in Renfrew Street, Glasgow where anarchists, CPGB, nationalists and Trotskyists debated - sometimes physically.

In an open air arena ordinary working class men and women discussed passionately the ideas of Clara Zetkin, Bakunin, Kropotkin and many, many others. Robert Lynn revelled in this, and called it the University of Life.

In the late fifties, with the death of Raeside and the departure of Leach and Shaw abroad, the Glasgow Anarchist Group disintegrated and the task of reorganisation was left to Robert. This he did by immersing himself in his local community of the Calton. He and Jean, his constant companion, became well-known, well-respected and to many, myself included, well-loved characters.

Robert again went back to industry and worked at Howden's engineering plant in the south side of Glasgow. There he promoted his ideas of syndicalism and libertarianism. Sadly, thanks to trade union officials who immediately recognised the threat to their power, Robert's views did not meet with any great success.

However it was the Glasgow Anarchist Group of the early seventies which proved the most fruitful for Robert's ideas. There was a massive blossoming of literature and direct action. The publication of booklets such as "Practical Anarchy" and "Why Vote?", all bearing Robert's signature, appeared and were avidly read by many people who, disillusioned with political parties of all shades, were becoming attracted to the ideas of anarchism.

A great number of events were initiated by Robert especially the Glasgow Anarchist Summer School which is now becoming a tradition that attracts libertarian socialists from all over Britain.

His death on August 16th was a blow to his family, his many friends and comrades, and even also to his political opponents. He was generous to a fault and although he did not suffer fools gladly he rarely had a bad word to say about anyone, even the worst of us. Robert is survived by Jean and daughters Jean, Joan and Betty.

Loved deeply, missed sadly.

Stuart Christie

Mickey Fenn (1936-1996)

MICKEY FENN WAS born into a family of third generation Port of London dockers. Like most white East Londoners his family were from a mixed background with German, Jewish and Irish roots. He was evacuated out of the East End during the War and sent to stay initially with the aristocratic Bowes-Lyon family, cousins of the present Queen Mother. He remembered going out in a Rolls-Royce complete with chauffeur to buy fish and chips, he was later evacuated further - to a workhouse!

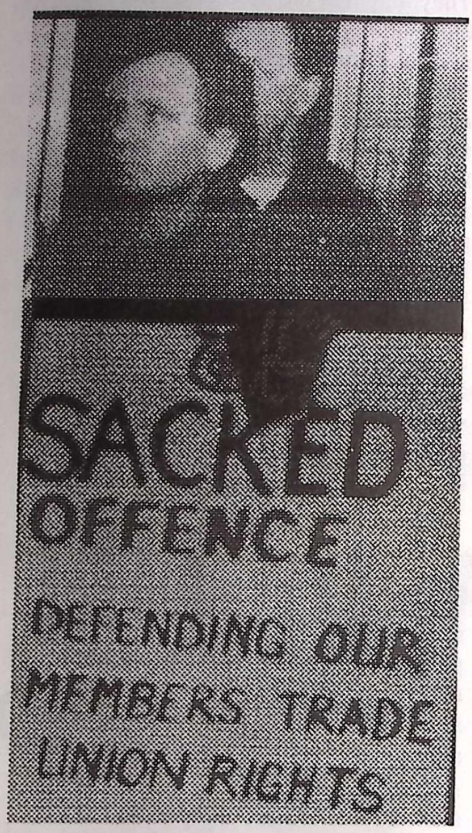
Returning to the post-war East End he went to school in Cable Street and straight into trouble. His time with the Bowes-Lyon family had given him an upper class accent, hardly street cred for the son of a docker. It was his accent, that he quickly lost, that taught him the need to defend himself, first in the playground and later in the streets. Despite his short stature he remained a first rate man in a tight spot.

He left school at fourteen, to look after his family following his father's suicide, until 1956 when he found himself taking part in the invasion of Egypt as a National Serviceman. His experience of this barely concealed Imperialist War, (Mickey always referred to it as "dirty") that awakened in him his political consciousness and he joined the Communist Party.

After trying his hand at a number of jobs he found himself working in the London Docks, where his intelligence and strength of character led him to be elected a Shop Steward. It was Mickey who broke the Pro-Enoch Powell movement that

was developing among dockers following Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech. The political skill with which he dealt with this reactionary movement demonstrated a firm understanding of the dockers and a clear opposition to racism.

With the decline of the CP Mickey moved on to the International Socialists, later the Socialist Workers Party. He was a founder of the Anti Nazi League and a chief activist with their anti-fascist action squads in East London. In



1976 he found himself in the Old Bailey, where he persuaded a jury to accept that a fascist had thrown himself head first on to his fist and that the broken hand that he was nursing was a product of an industrial injury, a fact attested to by six fellow dockers and later compensated for by his employers.

He was an uncompromising anti-fascist, "If they put one of you in hospital, put three of theirs in the next ward," he would often advise young anti-fascists. As a committed revolutionary, legality for him was the legality of the boss class not the workers. He had no truck with New Labour or New Realism, the struggle he engaged in his whole life was always the same - the class war.

Despite the best efforts of the Dockers the National Dock Labour Scheme, the backbone of dockers employment rights, was broken by the Tories in the 1980's. Mickey and other militants who had vigorously opposed it found themselves sacked.

This never stopped Mickey, he continued to make himself available as a speaker on anti-fascist platforms and always ready to offer advice and support to young militants. It was returning from a meeting in the West country, where we had shared a platform that I first really got to know the man. We travelled back to London getting drunk, swapping stories and baiting the right-wing philosopher Roger Scruton who had been foolish enough to get in the same carriage as us.

Mickey and I used to meet regularly for a drink in East London giving me and others the opportunity to pick his brains and listen to his tales. He was an inspiration to a generation of activists.

His Guardian obituary claimed that Mickey had left the SWP on a "matter of principle"; yes the principle being that he hated their guts, often claiming "There is nothing revolutionary about them". Indeed his last meeting with Tony Cliff, the leader of the SWP resulted in Mickey being led away by his wife Denise from the confrontation.

For all his political activity Mickey was a man who put his family first. His five children are a credit to any father, despite the Twins getting him nicked under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, but that is another story.

Mickey represented all that was best in the East End working class, an uncompromising adversary and an unwavering friend. He will be greatly missed. Should you wish to show your respects his family have asked that donations should be made to the striking Liverpool Dockers - typical of the man and his family, Cheers Mickey!

DM

The Merseyside Dockers Shop Stewards Appeal Fund, c/o J.Davies, Secretary, 19 Scorton St, Liverpool L6 4AS

Tony Briggs

ON WEDNESDAY 5th June over 100 anarchists, family and friends of Tony Briggs said their goodbyes to a good friend and a staunch rank and file comrade. Killed in a biking accident at only 48, Tony's funeral took place at the Newmarket Road cemetary, Cambridge and so many turned up some had to stand outside. The service, put together by his friends and conducted by Aileen, included music by Dylan, Donovan, Rodrigo as well as the haunting words of "Justice/ Injustice" by Chumbawumba and "The Ballad of Joe Hill". Nicky led the singing of the "Internationale" and a number of Tony's family and friends shared their memories of Tony with us. Tales of his escapades on demos and pickets abound, including the story of a holiday abroad which somehow led to joining an anti-government demo and getting chased by the riot police, brought smiles and not a few tears from all of us.

Tony's background was working class and ex-army and his anarchism reflected this. He hated the bosses of all shades, and whether collecting for the miners, going up against the police on the poll tax demo or battling it out at Wapping, he had no time for the wafflers and separatists of the anarchist movement, what mattered to Tony was to stand up and be counted and if necessary, to go down fighting! We shall all miss him but I'm sure he would have been the first to agree with Joe Hill's words, "Don't mourn, organise!" So long, brother!

Bill Wells

Postscript: A benefit a few days later in Tony's name raised over £1500 which will start a fund for anarchist friends who find themselves homeless (as Tony once did).

AFTER YOU'VE GONE....

Sadly, we have reflected a lot about funerals recently. How his funeral was conducted was important to Albert Meltzer, not least because he had seen so many old comrades and friends receive totally inappropriate send offs. Our secular correspondent takes up this theme in the article below, and in the second article another takes a broader view of ceremonies as a whole.

THERE ARE problems facing people who do not wish their death to be taken over by the religious. Most burials and cremations are carried out after a religious service. The service seems largely to be for the benefit and consolation of those mourning the departed, though how any sensible person can find consolation in a time of sadness by renewing their belief in an almighty being who could have avoided the sadness by prolonging the dead person's life if wanted to is a mystery to me.

But there is no need to have a religious service as part of a funeral. Anybody can conduct a funeral. I have done a number myself. Anybody who wishes their remains to be disposed of without any religious ceremony should make this wish known to their friends and relations. It should be stated in your will and your executor should be made aware of it.

The principal organisations offering non religious funeral observances are the British Humanist Association and the National Secular Society. The best way to make sure you are given a non-religious funeral is to get a friend to agree to do one for you and to make sure you die before the friend. Clearly the friend must be someone reliable and not given to making promises they do not expect to keep.

The other way would be to make a bequest to the National Secular Society or British Humanist Association conditional upon them providing you with a non-religious funeral observance. The bequest need not be substantial but I would say £100 would be a reasonable amount. Whichever way you decide to follow to get a non religious send off make sure your executor knows about it and sets the thing in motion in good time, which is as soon as you are dead.

The addresses are National Secular Society, 47 Theobalds Road, London WC1. Tel 0171 204 3126

Humanist Ceremonies, Fosse Manor Farm, Moreton In Marsh, Gloucestershire. Tel 010608 652063

But don't be too selfish about this. The funeral observance is for the benefit of those you leave behind, not yourself. They may feel the need of a religious element in your funeral, even if for reasons plain people like me cannot fathom. On the other hand non religious observances have great dignity and feeling. Those who have attended having only been used to the religious sort are usually very favourably impressed because of these factors. Because of these considerations, as a lifelong atheist, my arrangements with my Christian wife are that if I predecease her she will give me a religious funeral, but that if she dies before I do I will give her a non-religious send off. It gives me an additional reason to seek to live for a very long time.

Will you marry me....?

WE HAD A fantastic day when we said goodbye to Albert. I started off quite sad, thinking what a gap he would leave, but by the end of the day I was smiling. The people who were lucky enough to be at Albert's funeral will never forget it. I've tried to tell others about it but it's been really difficult to get over to them the idea of a funeral that wasn't mournful.

A few people at work saw the articles in *The Guardian* or *The Independent* and made a point of telling me how brilliant it sounded - comedian at the crematorium, Marlene Dietrich as he went down the hatch. It was definitely the best funeral I've ever been to, but why are the rest so crap?

People have always felt the need to mark the big life events by having celebrations, ceremonies or rituals. The obvious ones are birth, naming, coming of age, marriage and death. The frustrating thing for anarchists is that the church and state seem to have cornered the market in these. You can't even get born without having to register your existence with the appropriate authority or getting the local god-botherer to give you the OK. There may be some people reading this who reckon any ritual is a waste of time, but hang on a minute. We don't believe in marriage, I've heard it so many times. But why not? A good anarchist friend of mine got married a few years ago and just recently so did another. I'm not going to condemn either of them. Let's think about why.

The main argument against getting married is that it means the state and perhaps the church to have a say in our lives that is neither desirable nor necessary. The state only sanctions that which it seeks to control and regulate. Marriage is a clumsy tool for approving and perpetuating "normal" relationships, social engineering at its most primitive. If you're not a clean, moral monogamous heterosexual, forget it. People that choose marriage are choosing, consciously or unconsciously, to backup exclusion of gay relationships, polygamy, casual sex, in fact anything but what they do! Marriage is about seeking and receiving approval.

The reason I hesitate to condemn people who choose marriage is that I recognise their need for a ritual and I also see the failure to provide a secular alternative free from state interference. Albert's funeral inspired me to look for alternatives. When I die people must smile or my executor will throw mayonnaise at them. When my partner and I finally buy a house I hope to have a "we love each other and promise not to scarper with half the money" party, and if I'm ever lucky enough to have a kid it'll have a naming ceremony and a coming of age party that makes it feel really special and bows down before no god and no government.

Let's be brave and let's be creative. Celebrate your birthday when it ceases to be fashionable. Invite your friends on a weekend away and "name" your kid during a picnic on the beach. When s/he comes of age give them an extravagantly wrapped sex toy (not one of those horrible keys on a card). When someone has a significant relationship, sexual or not, send them flowers every month for a year. When someone dies, don't cry.

PD

THE CHRISTIE CARBALLO COMMITTEE AND THE REWRITING OF HISTORY

(Editors' note: The article below is in response to some sadly typical lies in *Freedom* about our late founder, Albert Meltzer, and his activities in the sixties)

Attempting to cast doubt on Albert's sixty years of commitment and militancy, certain persons better known for the volume than the quality of their utterances (and that's being charitable - very) have asked in print "Where was he when Stuart Christie was arrested in Spain in 1964? What did he do to save Stuart from the death penalty?" As the Secretary of the Christie-Carballo Defence Committee, I can only say that I do not remember for sure. I do know, though, that Albert made available for our meetings his premises near the British Museum and that we only met elsewhere to make use of a telephone. After Stuart and Fernando Carballo Blanco's trial and conviction the Defence Committee met regularly at Albert's premises, and it was at least partly as a result of its efforts that Stuart was released in 1967.

I know that Albert's premises were available to any anarchist or related group, entirely free of charge - despite the fact that he himself was paying rent for them - for a number of years, both before and after their use by the defence committee, a service that was both unparalleled and extremely convenient in view of their situation. This in itself makes recent attempts to belittle his contribution to the cause of human freedom seem not merely spiteful but downright ungrateful!

Mark Hendy

Vile is the vengeance on the ashes cold;
And envy base to barke at sleeping fame.
Spencer - *The Faerie Queen*, Bk2, c8

Which Lefty ? No.1

Q From which political party manifesto do the following extracts come ?

"There is also the ultra-left. Trotskyites howl around the edges of this system, blaming others but rarely doing anything useful themselves. These are the hectoring paper sellers outside stations or student unions, mostly more in need of a psychiatrist than a revolution. Their organisations chew up and spit out thousands of young people, leaving behind only cynicism and a hatred of themselves. They have the strategy of toddlers and the political perspective of goldfish. They hate real workers. We have no more in common with them than with Labour, Tories, or the Mormons."

Any guesses, Red Action, the IWCA? Solidarity Federation maybe ? If you're still guessing, here's a clue:

"One unique aspect of the Party is its style of work. Our founding engineers were famous for their style and ingenuity in the guerrilla struggle which makes up day to day life in any workplace. The tradition of using lateral thinking and a wicked sense of humour as weapons of war is more valuable now than ever. A sense of perspective is equally vital. We recruit slowly and carefully and most of our members stay for good"

Still puzzled ?

"We are for Europe's workers, and for the right of workers in Britain to control their own future, so we oppose the EU. Our future is as an independent state run by and for the people who live and work here. That's real internationalism."

Any closer ? Try the membership application form headed "Yes, I'm interested in helping rebuild Britain".

The answer is, of course, the Communist Party of Britain Marxist Leninist.(No brackets). Small but perfectly formed by howling Reg "forward with Albania" Birch. Quotes are from their 1995 glossy manifesto "Where's the Party ?". You knew it all along.

Quiz answers

1. Dionysius Exiguus was commissioned by Pope St John I to prepare a chronology. He started time with the foundation of Rome, and re-started it the year he reckoned Jesus' birth occurred which he called 1 AD (anno domini - Year of our Lord). Because he didn't begin with year zero, the last year of a the first decade was 10 A.D. and this has continued so that, by his system's reckoning, the last year of the second millennium A.D. will be 2000, not 1999, which is what most people would think, based on how we normally count. We say have two parties, one on 31st Dec 1999, and another on 31st Dec 2000.

2. Leon Trotsky, in his role as butcher of Kronstadt, in an article in *Kronstadt Izvestia* no.7, March 9th 1921.

3. He wouldn't be here! His father fled from Rumania, which according to him is a "safe country". The Hungarian and Roma minorities there might well disagree.

4. They published papers which carried reports from other areas of the country, particularly obituaries. Workers wanted to keep in touch with home areas and were also interested in any ideas that could help them better the dire conditions they faced.

5. "The Empire of the Dandelion". Crosby's book details how Europeans brought large elements of their native ecologies with them when they colonised other (chiefly temperate) regions of the globe. Some of this was deliberate, such as wheat, vines, cattle, horses. Others came along for the ride, including the dandelion, the rat and various insect and plant pests. Freed from their native ecologies where there were predators to keep them under control they have flourished. The dandelion's range includes all temperate zones in both the southern and northern hemisphere.

This lesson still hasn't been learned; the introduction of the cane toad to Australia by greedy cane farmers in the 30's is the best 20th century example, but as recently as a decade ago voracious tropical snails have been introduced onto Pacific islands where they have wrought havoc with plants and animals alike.

The Anti-Election Alliance

We welcome the initiative created by the formation of the Anti-Election Alliance. We feel that this is a real opportunity for the anarchist/ libertarian movement to pull together for a change. Group sectarianism has only stifled our movement, and while groups are valid for national action, this is limited in the absence of a nationwide, united, co-ordinated approach to class struggle. All of the various groups have their own validities and short-comings. It is time for us to recognise what all contribute to the movement as a whole. Infighting serves only one purpose, the labelling and divisions the State wants.

No national group can operate solely on their own terms. As is the case in East Kent and in the country as a whole, members of various groups work together anyway.

The AEA has a lot of potential to become a unifying force in our movement. We feel this alliance should survive the general election and become a coherent anarchist/ libertarian co-ordinator, as a forum between one another. The AEA should publish a bulletin, which should be sent to all individuals and groups involved in it, to show the validity and usefulness of our different approaches and provide a vehicle for debate and action

Rob & Andy, East Kent @s

REPLY: You make some good points here, but the real thrust of your argument is about national anarchist organisation, which begs two questions: Who will it be made up of and what will its politics be? The consensus among anarchists about any real issues has yet to be seen to exist, and there isn't agreement on making anti-election work a priority.

Our next issue will feature stuff on the election and we welcome any correspondence and articles on the subject, as well as on the question of organisation.

Journalism and Terrorism

I read an article recently about "terrorist movements" in Germany. The journo was on safe ground talking about Rote Zora being a women's action group.. but went on to claim that the Revolutionary Cells was their male counterpart! Of course we can mock ("the angry Boys Brigade") but I wonder if this fount of knowledge had seen the boys go off to bond in the woods while the women got on with the socially useful task of burning down police stations?

John, Itinerant Anarcho

Why Anarchists should join the Tories

One of your readers has been bold enough to write in and argue that anarchists should join the Labour Party. May I be even bolder and suggest that anarchists should instead consider joining the Conservative Party.

It is a fact that there are more working class members in the Conservative Party than there are in the Labour Party. Today's Labour Party is a bit like the Spanish Communist Party during the revolution: it is recruiting almost exclusively among the middle class! The Conservative Party is far more of a broad church than Labour which is a tightly controlled democratic centralist managerial machine. The Conservative Party includes everyone form capitalist rich bastards to working class individuals who believe in self improvement, from authoritarian traditionalists and corporate protectionists to radical libertarians who want to push back the state.

A right wing, New Labour government will be more oppressive to working class people than the Tories have been up to now. Since Clinton took over in the US he has imposed far worse measures in practice, like massive prison building, workfare, curfews, immigration controls, than Bush ever did. Blair will do just the same. As long as the Tories muddle along in office the libertarian wing of the party can act as a brake on the otherwise unrestrained growth in state bureaucracy, spending and taxation. It was always a statist myth that bureaucracy, taxes and state spending ever had anything to do with the working class interests. None of these ever strengthened working class independence and communitarian self reliance.

Michael Howard is now encountering problems with his prison expansion programme due to financial constraints. He has also been forced to drop measures like compulsory ID and mass curfews. With a new right corporatist tax and spend government behind him, Jack Straw will face no such constraints, he will be free to run amok. Typical Black Flag readers will be among his first targets of the New Labour broom sweeping clean.

In many a conservative working class community the local Tory club is the hub of social life. the beer is of a better quality than in Labour clubs, too. Why not join the conservatives today?

Donato U.Belevit

COMMENT: We think our readers can judge this for themselves. We'd just like to say to anyone considering writing a similar piece on any other party, no thanks, not even if there's a poem attached!

The Meltzer Press

A NEW ANARCHIST imprint, The Meltzer Press (TMP), has been set up to publish works which would have been close to Albert's heart. TMP will work closely with The Kate Sharply Library which will receive 50% of all profits; the balance will go towards an ongoing programme of unpublished manuscripts and worthwhile out of print publications held at the KSL.

TMP will also publish an illustrated celebration of the life and times of Albert Meltzer. Among other titles scheduled for publication are: *The CNT* (3 vols) by José Peirats and *Ponzan - Resistant Extraordinary* by Antonio Tellez.

The first TMP title is *Sentenced To Death Under Franco* by Juan Busquets Verges (translated by Paul Sharkey).

Juan Busquets Verges, a 21 year old CNT activist, fought with the anarchist guerrilla groups in Catalonia from late 1948 till October 1949 when he was arrested, sentenced to death and then reprieved to spend the next 20 years in jail. This is Juan Busquets' factual account of how he survived those twenty years and of the comrades who shared his experiences. The second part details Busquets' experiences with the anarchist movement from his release in 1969 and his current commitment to the Asociacion de Presos Politicos del Franquismo en Francia.

Note this is a limited edition, A4 spiral bound and is not available in other formats. It costs £12.50 including p&p from The Meltzer Press, PO Box 35, Hastings, East Sussex TN34 2UX

CONTACTS LIST

We decided it was high time we put a contact list in *Black Flag*. Obviously, we aren't going to list all local groups of each national federation, so we have included their addresses separately. We have included Class War as we understand they will retain a national address until the constituent groups have established their future. We do list some local groups of national organisations where they actively support *Black Flag*, or are a particularly fine local group.

Ultimately, we want to have so many groups on this page it has to be in tiny print! If you think you should be here, let us know.

NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS:

Solidarity Federation (anarcho-syndicalists)
PO Box 29, SWPDO, Manchester M15 5HW

Anarchist-Communist Federation
c/o 84B Whitechapel High St,
London E1 7QX

Class War, PO Box 3241, Birmingham B8 3DP

INDUSTRIAL

Education Workers Network - SolFed
Communications Workers Network - SolFed
Both PO Box 29, SWPDO, Manchester M15 5HW

Transport Workers Network - SolFed
PO Box 73, Norwich NR3 1QD

Public Service Workers Network - SolFed
PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE

Industrial Workers of the World - British Isles, F.Lee, Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester LE1 1WB

IWW Couriers Union - 10A Bradbury St, London N16 8JN

LOCAL GROUPS

SCOTLAND

Dundee Anarchist Group, Martyn Quinn, Flat 59, Tay Mills Flats, 23 Brown St, Dundee

Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh c/o Peace & Justice Centre, St Johns Church, Princes St Edinburgh EH2

Glasgow Anarchists, PO Box 1008, Glasgow G42 8AA

NORTH ENGLAND

Bradford 1 in 12 Club, 21-23 Albion St, Bradford BD1 2LI Tel: 01274 734160

Leeds Anarchist group, PO Box HP 115, Leeds LS6 1UN

Liverpool Anarchists PO Box 110, Liverpool L69 8DP

Preston SolFed, PO Box 384, Preston PR1 6PQ

Sheffield Anarchists, PO Box 446, Sheffield S1 1NY

Tyneside Anarchist Group, PO Box 1TA, Newcastle NE99 1TA

SOUTH EAST

East Kent Anarchists, c/o Canterbury Centre, St Alphege Lane, Canterbury

Haringey Solidarity Group, PO Box 2474 London N8 0HW

Hounslow Anarchists c/o PO Box 87, Hampton, Middlesex TW13 3TF

Oxford Solidarity Action, c/o BM BCM 1715 London WC1N 3XX

Red & Black Club (S.E.London) c/o BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX

South Herts SolFed PO Box 493, St Albans AL1 5TW

EAST ANGLIA

Cambridge Anarchists, Box A, Arjuna, 12 Mill Rd, Cambridge
Norwich & Norfolk Solidarity Centre, PO Box 73, Norwich NR3 1QD

SOUTH WEST

North Somerset, PO Box 1980, Radstock BA3 3FH
South Bristol Anarchists, PO Box 1076, Bristol BS99 1WF

IRELAND

Organise!, PO BOX 505, Belfast BT11 9EE

Ainriail, PO BOX 505, Belfast BT11 9EE

Workers Solidarity Movement, PO Box 1528, Dublin 8

OTHER CONTACTS

Advisory Service for Squatters
2 St Pauls Rd LONDON N1 (tel: 0171-359 8814)

Anarchist Black Cross (prisoner support)
121 Railton Rd, London SE24

Legal Defence & Monitoring Group, BM Haven, London WC1N 3XX

125 YEARS AFTER THE PARIS COMMUNE

The Commune of Paris was the revolutionary municipal government of Paris established on March 18th 1871 and ended by slaughter on May 28th 1871.

In March 1871, Parisians reacted to seemingly anti-Parisian acts of the government by establishing an independent government of Paris. Members of the Commune included activists of the First International, Blanquists, Anarchists and Jacobins. It was substantially a proletarian organisation. The National Government reorganised the French army and invaded Paris. Over 3300 were killed then and more were judicially murdered afterwards. Countless others were exiled.

The Beginning of it all ?

For many on the left the Commune was the beginning of it all. For us it is a critical example of the intricacies of worker organisation, the viciousness of State repression and the heroism of worker resistance. Workshops abandoned by employers were taken over and run by the workers themselves. Elections were direct and delegates were clearly recallable. Trotskyists argue that the problem with the commune was the lack of revolutionary leadership! We see its strength in the efforts of the Communards to prevent the emergence of this leadership! When defeat loomed for the insurrection and the Jacobins and Blanquists suggested the creation of a committee of public safety, the Proudhonists and Internationalists broke away and published a text that was to remain valid long after the commune itself - and because it was forgotten, socialism sank into the blood follies that dominated the Twentieth Century.

"Given that the institution of a committee of public safety will have as its essential effect the creation of a dictatorial power that will not in anyway enhance the Commune. And it being expected that this institution would formally clash with the political aspirations of the electoral masses whom the Commune represents. And consequently, expecting that the creation of any dictatorship by the Commune would be, on its part, a genuine usurpation of the people's sovereignty. We vote against - Andrieu, Langevin, Ostyn, Vermorel, V. Clément, Theisz, Serailler, Avriol, Malon, Lefrançais, Courbet, Girardin, Clémence, Arnoult, Beslay, Valles, Varlin, Jouve."

Harsh Realities

Maurice Joyeaux, French Anarchist, writing in "La Rue" summed it all up: "The Paris Commune was a crossroads where the multifarious currents thrown up by men's hopes in the areas of organisation, religion, liberty, the fatherland, the republic, reason and finally society met. It was an intersection where Romantic Europe and Revolutionary Europe crossed, as did the arts, letters, barricades and all of the outlaws who had been roving the world for a decade past, sowing revolt.

The Commune was Courbet and Blanqui, Proudhon and the masonic lodges, the military on half-pay from the Algerian wars, a hardheaded petite bourgeoisie absorbed by manufacture, embittered politicians, bewildered workers, and a latent misery releasing men for adventures, a world being born, another in demise, and classes taking clearer shape. Yes, this was the Commune before and above all straight after 18th March.

But for 10 weeks all of these motley elements were to be swept along by events. Their dreams were to come to grips with the harsh realities of the Fray and it was out of the Commune that Anarchy emerged. Men in prison or in exile were to scrutinise the political content of the Commune. Out of this slow maturation of minds were to come Libertarian Socialism and Revolutionary Syndicalism."

Underneath all the state socialist veneer, after all attempts to re-write history, we recognise the genuine attempt of the workers of Paris to organise their own lives. Such times have occurred regularly since - from the Ukraine, Barcelona, Hungary, to the pit villages during the Great Strike of 1984-85. It is our history, one we should study and own.